UNIVERSITY OF CAPE TOWN

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Such Painful Knowledge:

Hope and the (Un)Making of Futures in Cape Town

By

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A dissertation submitted in partial fulfilment of the Master of Social Sciences (MSocSci) degree in Social Anthropology

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4 February 2020

PLAGIARISM DECLARATION

I declare that except for the sources used or quoted, which have been acknowledged in the bibliography, this study is my own work and has not been submitted for any degree or examination at any other university.

Signed by candidate

4 February 2020

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I must thank my supervisor Kharnita Mohamed for her patience, insight, and unwavering support. It has been my great good fortune to have her shepherd me through both my Honours and Masters research projects. She has been a valuable teacher, mentor, and interlocutor; I hope that one day I am in a position to extend to other bourgeoning thinkers and writers the same kind of generosity. My sincere gratitude also goes to Angela, Hlumile, Nema, Rachel, Robyn, Tafadza, and Thandiwe. I thank them for giving up some of their most productive hours to entertain my curiosities and for allowing me into their lives and worlds. This dissertation would not have been possible without them. Although not all their stories are shared in this text, the time I spent with them has enlarged my conceptions of love, of human inventiveness, and of what goes on in the world. I am forever grateful for these gifts and I hope I have done justice to the complexity of their lives.

This research was generously funded by the Wenner-Gren Foundation, the National Research Foundation, and the AW Mellon Research Chair in the Anthropology of the First Thousand Days of Life. I wish to extend my thanks to Prof. Fiona Ross for her continued support of this project and for checking in on me at precisely the right moments. I also wish to thank Vivienne Toleni and Chris Machelm-Peters for their institutional support and occasional pep talks that enabled me to complete both this dissertation and my degree as a whole. Finally, a heartfelt thanks to my friends and family for cheering me on and listening patiently as I complained about my struggles with this project for the eleven millionth time. I would especially like to thank my friend Siviwe Nomkala, without whom the last three years would have been unbearable. This dissertation is dedicated to my mother, Henriëtta Cupido, for reasons too numerous to list here. I hope have done her proud.

No one mentioned above, of course, is responsible for the views or errors in this text.

ABSTRACT

Recent writing in the anthropology of affect and cognate fields has positioned hope as a useful category with which to examine socio-political life and formulate a political and theoretical response adequate to its form. This dissertation extends this endeavour by exploring the 'hopeful projects' mothers and families undertake in order to secure their children's futures in contemporary Cape Town. Based on ethnographic research conducted with Black mothers between March and October 2018, I argue that the supposedly private maternal hopes my interlocutors hold are in fact indexical of the ways in which social inequality functions and becomes manifest in everyday life and care. Situated at the interface of embodied experience and political histories, their hopes are indicative of how liberal logics of self-extension, self-mastery, and self-maximisation are inhabited to produce alternative futures. At the same time, however, such hopes are continually undone by contexts of intractable structural violence and deprivation, reinvested into normative notions of kinship, domesticity, sexuality, and the body, or marshalled to perform reparative work that should properly fall under the purview of the state. In detailing the ways in which my interlocutors attempt to craft more capacious, more just, and more materially abundant futures for their children, I illustrate the affective entailments of life-building in post-Apartheid South Africa.

Keywords: Hope, Futurity, Mothering, Structural Inequality, Post-Apartheid South Africa

CONTENTS

"Paradoxically, hope is on intimate terms with despair. It asks for more than life promises. It is poised for disappointment."

- Cheryl Mattingly[1]

"Power organises even our truest obligations, no matter our good intentions, no matter our desires."

- Elizabeth A. Povinelli[2]

"When do norms become forms?"

- Lauren Berlant[3]

[1] Mattingly (2010: 3)
[2] Povinelli and Turcot DiFruscia (2012: 83)
[3] Berlant in Ahmed (2004: 190).

INTRODUCTION

First, let's start with a story, a paradigmatic example of some of the arguments I will flesh out in this dissertation. In Robyn's[4] office one afternoon, I asked her to tell me a story about one of her children, her favourite story. She beamed. "Well, Kirby's journey has been astounding," she started. When he was twenty-four months old she took him to the paediatrician for a check-up. Although he was generally in good health, something seemed to be amiss. "They gave him a car and expected that he would ride it around," she said, "make 'vroom-vroom' sounds, that kind of thing. But he didn't. He just turned it on its head and spun the wheel. He also didn't respond when his name was called, which children that age usually do, even if they can't verbally respond or don't understand what you're saying." Kirby, it became clear, had not reached many of his developmental milestones, particularly the ones for language and imaginative play.[5]

Robyn had, however, been tentatively aware of some of this, as her graduate research in linguistics had taught her much about child language acquisition. To her dismay, many of the things she learnt did not, in the months she took care of her son, materialise for him. The paediatrician thus recommended that the family see a neurologist because she was concerned about the possibility that the boy might have Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD), something that, again, Robyn had suspected, since she spent many an afternoon Googling what might be wrong. Their visit to the neurologist some weeks later proved decisive: "the neurologist came back with a diagnosis of Pervasive Developmental Disorder Not Otherwise Specified [PDD-NOS], which meant that he had markers of ASD but not

[4] All names mentioned in this dissertation are pseudonyms.

[5] In South Africa, it is advised that parents bring children to medical clinics for regular check-ups, especially during the first six weeks, at nine months, at eighteen months, and again at twenty-four months. During these check-ups, medical practitioners will usually perform various kinds of immunisation and screen for development (including developmental disabilities) and growth. The developmental screening monitors the child's physical and psycho-social development and checks if they have reached certain developmental milestones, such as sitting, standing, crawling, walking, talking, and handling objects. The growth screening entails the regular measurement of the child's weight and, sometimes, height. If there are problems, the child is referred to a specialist clinic or rehabilitation professional. See here for the Western Cape Department of Health's (WCDH) page on screenings of child development and growth: https://www.westerncape.gov.za/service/child-developmental-screening-and-growth-monitoring

enough to return a full diagnosis of Autism or Asperger's Syndrome." And so, Robyn's "hopeful project" began.

The family quickly embarked on an intensive intervention program that included speech therapy and occupational therapy. Robyn reached back into her undergraduate and postgraduate studies for ideas that might serve her quest. She engaged with the work of the psychologist B.F. Skinner, who, as she put it, "said that language is a behaviour and, in the same way you can modify other behaviours, through reward and punishment, for example, you can modify language." She compared Skinner to the linguist Noam Chomsky, who, as she put it, "talks about the innateness of language and how we are born with brains that are wired for language and all we need is the input from language around us to activate this." To her mind, Skinner's approach made more sense – "if language is innate my son would have talked by then," she said – and so she undertook, in addition to speech and occupational therapy, various games and activities at home that aligned with this approach.

Still distressed at the slow pace of his language acquisition, however, she persistently reached out to the Centre for Play and Learning in Kenilworth, Cape Town. "I called and emailed and called and emailed and called and emailed". Then one day she took Kirby in for an assessment and in the very first session the speech practitioner got him to say "ball". She begged the Centre to take him on, which they did, first once a week, then twice, then every day. "For two years I was the only one who could understand him because I spent the most time with him," she said, "we did so many things; I felt like I was training him for the language Olympics!" By the time Kirby turned four years old he began speaking in full sentences. "Today there's no indication that he ever had language issues. He's fully articulate, very intelligent, and ahead of some of his classmates in terms of language, and he has no speech impediment whatsoever."

In her office that day Robyn remembered how, when he first said his own name, she burst into tears. "I cried because [the neurologist] had told me that he might never speak," she said. Robyn felt that it was very unprofessional to dispense that kind of advice, especially since most people do not question medical professionals; their knowledge is viewed as unimpeachable. "She essentially gave me a death sentence, told me I must go home and 'cope'," she said, "thanks for your diagnosis, but I don't accept your prognosis." Her own research efforts, combined with the work of the staff at the Centre and

her partner and family's support, is what allowed her "hopeful project" to come to fruition and achieve some kind of success. When she and Kirby bumped into the neurologist on a shopping trip when he was six years old, the latter "was astounded by his progress," Robyn said, "and I was like 'yeah, bitch,[6] because I didn't listen to what you told me and I worked my ass off!'"

I share Robyn's story here because I want to highlight how hopes for the future function as a diagnostic of the workings of power and inequality. Rather than merely a depiction of love for an intimate other, her hopes showed, for example, the overly large part institutions and authoritative forms of knowledge play in people's lives. It reveals the socially pervasive fear of disability and the painful acknowledgement of the need to invest in "a particular culture's imaginary of the ordinary, everyday, or acceptable," (Mohamed and Shefer, 2015: 2). It illustrates the role access to resources and capital of various kinds (financial, social, cultural, intellectual) play in people's life chances and capacity to build a futural otherwise. And it illustrates the position of the contemporary mother, still often the primary caregiver of her child, working at heroic and sometimes unsustainable levels to secure that child's future.

* * *

Such Painful Knowledge is an ethnographic study of hope and the making of futures in post-Apartheid Cape Town. It is a study about what it means to raise and care for children in history's shadow, and to gift them with futures that might be more capacious, more generous, and more just than the past or present have allowed. Hope, I will argue, is not simply a positive affective orientation toward the future, but also an index through which we might come to know the world and the limits and possibilities it holds. This knowledge, this painful knowledge, entangles wider power structures with the everyday making of kin and care and is grounded on a porous division between political and intimate life. The various 'hopeful projects' I will delineate here, therefore, diagnose how power works and inequality

[6] I am aware that my inclusion of Robyn's use of the pejorative 'bitch' is not unproblematic. I have nevertheless retained it to highlight the density of the emotions she experienced during this time in her life.

functions, and how, in their various incarnations, they set forth the conditions within and through which futures are secured, life is reproduced, and persons come to be.

I began this research as part of a cohort of students working with Prof. Fiona Ross at the University of Cape Town, under the research project *Anthropology of the First 1,000 Days of Life*. The first thousand days of life refers to the period between a child's conception and second birthday and has emerged as a new site for inquiry with profound implications for understandings of health and heredity.[7] It holds social and material consequences for global and local policy-making, public health discourse, and academic and lay concepts of life. Primarily informed by recent scientific explorations in neuroscience, epigenetics, and epidemiology, the period between a child's conception and second birthday has thus been staged as a critical juncture determinative of future health and potential. The aim of our project, therefore, was to ethnographically examine how this public health discourse is engaged with and negotiated in both institutions and everyday life.

My interest in this field was to explore the kinds of futures mothers themselves imagined for their children. This question emerged out of my reading of some of the medico-scientific and public policy discourses attendant to this period, which are often rooted in a purportedly content- and value-free notion of a "healthy future". As an anthropologist, I intuited that people themselves might imagine a wide variety of futures for their children, and as a result, might undertake diverse decisions, actions, and practices to bring such futures into being, all in the context of specific socio-historical conditions. I therefore not only wanted to examine notions of futurity, in other words, the place of "the future in the present" (Malkki, 2001: 326-237; see also Bryant and Knight, 2019) but also contribute to ethnographic studies of motherhood in contemporary South Africa.

My reading before beginning my fieldwork taught me that most people are aware that there are a multiplicity of futures available to them (Kuzmanovic and Gaffney, 2017). That the making of such futures often hinges on moments and junctures, rather than clear, linear trails (Guyer, 2007). That although the future may not be entirely knowable, we can certainly understand, shape, and prepare for

[7] For a more comprehensive overview of this field of inquiry, see Michelle Pentecost's introduction to the *Anthropology of the First 1,000 Days of Life* project at *Somatosphere* – www.somatosphere.net/2016/04/introduction-the-first-thousand-days-of-life.html

it (Sardar, 2010; Schultz, 2012). And that such forms of preparation are produced by notions of anticipation which give forms of speculative imagining the authority to act in the present (Adams, Murphy, and Clarke, 2009). Similarly, I also understood that "motherhood takes place within specific historical contexts framed by interlocking structures of race, class, and gender" (Collins, 1994: 56). That motherhood is not always or only nurturing, but may be inimical to new life in contexts of poverty and precarity (Scheper-Hughes, 1992). That the complexities of motherhood are further entwined with patriarchal definitions of womanhood more generally (Ichou, 2006; Mokobocho-Mohlakoana, 2008). And that mothering often takes place outside the mother-child dyad (Sudarkasa, 2004; Moore; 2013).

With this in mind, I thus began conducting ethnographic research with Black[8] mothers between the ages of twenty-five and forty, all of whom are living, working, and raising children primarily in Cape Town, South Africa. My fieldwork took place between March and October 2018 and moved back-and-forth between townships[9] and suburbs in different parts of the city. It was through working with them that the concept of hope emerged for me. Hope is, of course, a positive affective orientation to the future and thus about imagined futures (Crapanzano, 2003; Miyazaki, 2004). It is social, which is why it is amenable to anthropological analyses (Crapanzano, 2003). And finally, as I have come to realise and will delineate in these pages, it is "on intimate terms with despair" (Mattingly, 2010: 3). Robyn's hopes, for example, which I shared earlier in this Introduction, illustrated a catalogue of social and political demands and obligations people need to fulfil for life to be reproduced. Her hopeful horizons thus not only give us insight into the form and substance of the prospective worlds she desires for her son but can also be read as a critical account of her given world.

[8] My use of the word "Black" here is drawn from the Black Consciousness movement and is used to strategically signify the racialised groups that were oppressed during Apartheid. I am averse to, and do not wish to rehearse, Apartheid-era racial classifications (white, black African, coloured, Indian). At the same time, I recognise that the strategic essentialist use of "Black" as a racial signifier collapses the Apartheid-era hierarchisation of race and their attendant experiences and effects. Resultantly, in instances where Apartheid-era categories are salient to the discussion, I will make careful use of them for analytical purposes. Nonetheless, I affirm the Black Consciousness notion of "Black" because it enables political solidarity between formerly racialised populations and in so doing contests the power of white supremacy and, in particular, its tactics of divide and rule.

[9] In South Africa, the word "township" is used to refer to urban living areas that are often under-resourced and/or underdeveloped. These tend to be located on the periphery of major cities and are usually inhabited by the city's Black residents. Historically, most people living in townships have either been moved there as a result of Apartheid-era forced removals or settled there as migrant labourers due to the township's proximity to employment opportunities available in the city.

As I will show throughout this dissertation, the supposedly private maternal hopes Robyn and my other interlocutors hold are indexical of how social inequality functions and becomes manifest everyday life and care. Situated at the interface of embodied experiences and political histories, their hopes are indicative of how liberal logics of self-extension, self-mastery, and self-maximisation are inhabited to produce alternative futures. At the same time, their hopes are also continually undone by contexts of intractable structural violence and deprivation; reinvested into normative notions of kinship, domesticity, sexuality, and the body; or marshalled to perform reparative work that should properly fall under the purview of the state. The conventional binary between structure and agency – central to much social-scientific thinking over the last hundred years – thus needs to be put on hold in order to grasp at the richness and complexity of the decisions and actions assembled here. The agentive practices I delineate do not always or only resist and protest social norms, but may also inhabit and refurbish them as a means of cultivating alternative, and often more fruitful, lifeworlds. In other words, agency can occur even within moments of subjugation. In this vein, my work is situated alongside feminist and queer anthropologists such as Mahmood (2005) and Weiss (2011) who have attempted to devise more nuanced understandings of agency, intentionality, and transformation that do not neatly map onto the Enlightenment values of individual freedom and autonomy.

Although this study aims to examine the hope and its place as a "structure of feeling" (Williams, 1977) in contemporary South Africa, it also has its limits. While this study is about how people make and unmake prospective futures, it is not a study of futurity as such, but rather about a specific way of inhabiting futurity, namely, through hopefulness. This is because I am only writing about one of the six orientations that have been identified as ways of relating to the future (the others are anticipation, expectation, speculation, potentiality, and destiny; see Knight and Bryant, 2019). Furthermore, although my arguments here emerge out of fieldwork conducted with mothers and the hopes they have for their children's futures, this is also not a study of motherhood as such. This is because, although I emphasise the mothering practices my interlocutors undertook to secure their children's futures, I engage with the category of "motherhood" as a discursive entity and personal identity only provisionally; see Walker's (1995) discussion on why it is important to engage with "motherhood" as simultaneously a discourse, an everyday practice, and a personal identity.

My contribution nonetheless holds value, two of which I will note here. Firstly, the argument that hope is a useful category for examining socio-political life has, of course, been articulated by other scholars. However, I augment this assertion by illustrating how the form and content of particular hopes – rather than just the reasons for their necessity (Harvey, 2000; Ahmed, 2004) or their distribution in society (Hage, 2003) – provide us with critical insight into the structure of a given society. Secondly, much writing on the category of hope has occurred in the Global North (my literature search was indicative of this) and so my efforts here is thus an attempt to examine the category from a Global South and specifically South African perspective. This is not merely to enumerate its various incarnations, but also to study it contextually and understand it as an affective experience whose style and substance, while resonating with experiences found elsewhere, is profoundly context-specific.

This dissertation is divided into six sections. In *Notes on a Method*, I outline my fieldsites and introduce my research participants, while also sketching the theoretical approaches which underpin my analysis, the methods I deployed to gather data, and the ethical strategy I operationalised to remain morally accountable to both my interlocutors and the community of anthropologists I am situated in. In Chapter 1, *The Promise of Hope: A Literature Review*, I provide an overview of the key texts which have engaged the category of hope in recent social theory, emphasising those strands which figure hope as (1) an attribute of persons crafted in relation to others, (2) a moral and political claim to the future, and (3) a method of knowledge formation, situating my own work at the intersection of these strands.

In Chapters 2, 3, 4, and 5, I provide ethnographic accounts of the myriad hopes held by my interlocutors Rachel, Nema, Thandiwe, Hlumile, Robyn, and Angela. Chapter 2, *An Archive of Longings*, focuses on Angela and Hlumile's desire for "ordinary" objects and upward mobility in contexts in which such entities and endeavours are difficult to secure. In Chapter 3, *(Normative) Objects of Desire*, I turn to Rachel and Thandiwe's affective investments in the normative objects of heterosexual marriage and private property as a means to stabilise and repair the uncertainty and failure of their prior kinship relations. In Chapter 4, *The Politics of Sacrificial Love*, I home in on Rachel and Nema's efforts to self-discipline and remake themselves as "responsible" subjects, a process which, for them, precludes the intimacy of caring for their children on a daily basis. And in Chapter 5, *Mothering and/as Transformative Pedagogy*, I come to grips with Hlumile and Robyn's efforts to prepare their

children for entry into local worlds marked by entrenched hierarchies and the perdurance of social suffering. Across these chapters, I illustrate how my interlocutors' hopes reveal both the mechanisms of power and inequality *and* the various ways in which these ordinary women activate their agentive capacities and build more generous futures for themselves and their children.

NOTES ON A METHOD

On Places and People

This research took place in Cape Town, South Africa. In particular, I conducted interviews and participant observation in the Cape Flats (primarily Bishop Lavis and Philippi), the Southern Suburbs (primarily Mowbray, Rondebosch, Kenilworth) and the Atlantic Seaboard (primarily Sea Point). These spaces are defined by their relation to Apartheid-era segregation: while the under-resourced townships of the Cape Flats were designed for the city's Black inhabitants, the affluent Southern Suburbs and Atlantic Seaboard were designed for its white inhabitants. As a result, the uneven socio-economic features of these areas reflect Apartheid's discriminatory distribution of resources while also revealing the slow pace of transformation post-1994. Although living in one part of the city rather than another does not automatically imply belonging to a particular socio-economic group or class,[10] it does nevertheless mean that one has differential access to certain goods (such as schooling, for example) which then produces different hopes around which futures are certain, possible, or improbable.

Although this project is not a multi-sited ethnography, my decision to move between disparate social and geographic locations nonetheless holds methodological and epistemological entailments. While the locations mentioned before were my interlocutors' residential neighbourhoods during my research, they are 'mobile subjects' (Nyamnjoh, 2013) with kinship networks and affective relations that stretch beyond these locations. Most of my interlocutors have lived in places other than the ones mentioned here.[11] Furthermore, many of their most important relationships are with people who live elsewhere (see chapters 4 and 5) while some of their future aspirations also point toward other locations

[10] Recent writing on class and socio-economic mobility among the black middle-class in South Africa has illustrated that class identity is often experienced heterogeneously and articulated relationally and contextually (Phadi and Manda, 2013; Khunou, 2015; Krige, 2015). What this means is that there is not always a one-to-one correspondence between one's experience of and identification with a particular social class and one's actual access to financial and material resources. Angela's complaints (in Chapter 2) is indicative of this: her desires, sensibilities, and aesthetic aspirations are profoundly middle-class, something that is incongruent with her location on the working-class Cape Flats.

[11] For example, Hlumile and Nema grew up in the Eastern Cape, Rachel in Citrusdal, and Thandiwe in Swellendam. Robyn was born in Durban and grew up in Johannesburg but also spent several years living in the United Kingdom as a teenager.

(see chapter 2). This is why I do not provide an exhaustive account of each of their local or residential communities as a mode of contextualisation. It is also why, following Gupta and Ferguson (1997a, 1997b), I am hesitant to valorise place-based ethnographic research as the only, or ultimate, form of anthropological knowledge-building. As will become clear, my aim in this dissertation is not to provide a "thick description" (Geertz, 1973) of the lives and places under consideration here, but rather to make connections between everyday concepts (such as hope) and abstract social structures (such as race, class, gender) in order to illuminate how the former might provide insight into how we understand and respond to the latter.

Finally, the arguments delineated here are based on research conducted with six women – Angela, Hlumile, Nema, Rachel, Robyn, and Thandiwe. My fieldwork took place, intermittently, between March and October 2018. At the time I conducted my research, all of my participants had children younger than two years, while some of them also had older children. My recruitment process drew on both purposive and snowball techniques. Most of my interlocutors were approached, by me, to take part in the study because they fit the criteria I had set for the study, i.e. they were Black women between the ages of twenty-five and forty with at least one child in the first thousand days of life age bracket. The rest were introduced to me later. Although I commenced my research with seven women, one of them withdrew from the study after we had conducted a life-history interview; I thus do not share or invoke her story in this text. Below I offer short narrative descriptions of each of my research participants followed by a table with their demographic information:[12]

- Angela is a neighbour of mine, her younger brother is a childhood friend. She enjoyed cooking and celebrity gossip, two hobbies we bonded over. At the time of my fieldwork, she was married to Dean with whom she had two children – Andrew and Lindsay – and lived in Bishop Lavis. My interviews with her were wonderful; she often treated them like an opportunity to get things of her chest, which made for a plaintive but poignant mood. I appreciated her candour, however, because it taught me that I was probably not as bad an interviewer as I had imagined.

[12] Please note that this information is only applicable to the time I undertook my fieldwork. Most of my research participants have since moved to other locations, changed forms of employment, or had more children.

- I came to know Hlumile through Nema. She had the most infectious laughter and took the best selfies. At the time of my fieldwork, she was married to Lonwabo with whom she had two daughters – Liya and Thando – and lived in Mowbray. During my interviews, conversations, and casual check-ins with Hlumile, she liked informing of whatever business venture she was currently working on. She was very ambitious and strategic, a great planner.
- Nema is a friend and former colleague. At the time of my fieldwork, she had a daughter, Omiyo, who was just over a year old and lived with Nema's parents in the Eastern Cape. Nema and I have an easy relationship that began in 2015 when, at a two-day workshop, we snuck out for a cigarette break and she borrowed my lighter. Numerous cigarette breaks followed that one and most of my interviews and conversations with her took place under pleasure-seeking circumstances, in bars and restaurants. She is curious and funny and a natural hostess, with an incredible capacity to make everyone feel at ease. Our research encounters were a joy.
- Rachel is also a neighbour. At the time of my fieldwork, she lived in Bishop Lavis with her sons Luciano, Xavier, and Damien. We had known each other since childhood but never moved in the same circles and I only came to know her better in 2017, when I invited her to take part in a small research project that then provided the impetus for this project. She was tall and quite obviously beautiful. In an alternate universe, she might have been a successful fashion model. She was also a loud-mouth, a tinge self-involved, and not at all an attentive listener – but I always enjoyed this quality about her and found it immensely comic, because she reminded me of a character from the television series *Girls*. Our research encounters usually entailed me hanging out with her and her sons over the course of an afternoon, chatting and watching television at her home.
- Robyn is a former colleague. A lover of literature, a vegan, and a natural "feminist killjoy" (Ahmed, 2010), she and I bonded over our mutual fondness for reading and interest in socially just pedagogies. During my fieldwork, she lived in Tokai and then Kenilworth with her sons Kirby and Sam (the former later moved to Northern Ireland to live with his father and paternal grandparents; see Chapter 5). As a child, she and her family lived in locations across South Africa and the United Kingdom, an itinerancy that perhaps explained her peculiar streak of independence; Robyn struck

me as the kind of person who could start a new life in another country tomorrow and do it with no fuss or frills. My interviews with her mostly consisted of cosy conversations in her office.

- I came to know Thandiwe through a friend. At the time of my fieldwork, she lived in Sea Point with her son Lungelo, only a few months old. She was driven, polished, and articulate – like a school head girl or an avatar for bourgeois feminism – but also self-deprecating and darkly funny. We connected over a shared interest in architecture and interior design. Although our interviews and conversations were slow-going to begin with – she was the only one of my research participants who I did not know in any other capacity – we eventually built a good rapport.

PARTICIPANT	RECRUITMENT PROCESS	AGE	OCCUPATION	RESIDENCE	NUMBER OF CHILDREN
Angela	Approached her directly, she is a neighbour	40	Customer Service Representative	Bishop Lavis	2 (Lindsay and Andrew)
Hlumile	Introduced by Nema	35	Project Coordinator	Mowbray	2 (Liya and Thando)
Nema	Approached her directly, she is a friend	25	Administrative Assistant	Philipi	1 (Omiyo)
Rachel	Approached her directly, she is a neighbour	28	Stay-at-home Mother/Unemployed	Bishop Lavis	3 (Luciano, Xavier, and Damian)
Robyn	Approached her directly, she is a former colleague	35	Project Coordinator	Tokai	2 (Kirby and Sam)
Thandiwe	Introduced by a friend	38	Chartered Accountant	Sea Point	1 (Lungelo)

Figure 1: Profile of Participants

On Theory

The arguments I forward in this dissertation are framed by two distinct theoretical perspectives: black feminist theory and affect theory. I have not, of course, engaged exhaustively with the literature travelling under these banners, nor have I followed them religiously in my interpretations. Instead of treating them as rigid explanatory frameworks, I have deployed them as 'lenses' through which to come to terms with and make sense of my data. They have, thus, offered me questions with which to approach my data, rather than prefabricated answers to what that data might mean. Such a stance is crucial, I believe, not only toward fulfilling the ethnographic injunction of understanding the social world on its own terms, but also toward ensuring that an account of what life in this corner of Africa might mean is not obscured or disfigured as a result of its encounter with analytical concepts that have emerged elsewhere.

The first theoretical approach I employ is black feminist theory. This body of knowledge emerged out of recognition of the double burden of oppression black women face in white supremacist and patriarchal societies (hooks, 1984; Hill-Collins, 2002). It thus offers a way of mapping social inequalities (Crenshaw, 1991) while also providing impetus to thinking about various social categories together, given how "the hierarchisation of being as lived experience in its messy contradictions [simultaneously] draws on race, gender, sexuality, class, nationality and able-bodiedness" (Mohamed, 2018: 243). A specifically black feminist anthropology (McClaurin, 2001) brings these injunctions to bear on the anthropological project, placing black women's experiences at the forefront and theorising gender in relation to various other identities, thus sharpening the focus on social and historical specificity the discipline has been known for.

Although I owe a great debt to US-based black feminisms, I am also influenced by black feminist studies of gender and sexuality in Africa more specifically. This is because these categories are not only social but also historical and temporal (Oyěwùmí, 2005), since, to provide one example, the governance and remaking of African expressions of gender and sexuality were a core component of the colonial enterprise and subsequent postcolonial regimes (Amadiume, 1988; Nyanzi, 2011). Although shifts in such expressions have, of course, taken place alongside changes in the political-economy, there is still often, in South Africa at least, a continuation across time of how gender and

sexuality are understood, performed, and received (Ratele, 2009). An attentiveness to local manifestations of these categories is thus crucial to the arguments I unpack in this dissertation, particularly as they pertain to questions of marriage and kinship and how these figure in the making of alternative futures.

My use of these separate, but allied, versions of black feminist theory emerges, firstly, out of recognition of the fact that a sensitivity toward race, for example, is not necessarily intrinsic to the anthropological project but needs to be cultivated (Harrison, 2008). Furthermore, I deploy this approach because it allowed me to come to terms with how people's location within and between given social categories take on particular meanings within certain contexts and lay the groundwork for their life chances and opportunities. Finally, I employ it because it allows me to centre the experiences of Black women and their families, while also using those experiences to mount a broader critical analysis of how hope functions, and how its fruition in the form of actual practices, relations, and objects is negotiated and sustained in the context of contemporary South Africa.

Among the strengths of this approach has been the fact that it alerts me to the importance, per Mohamed (2018), of paying attention to multiple social categories and their histories and present-day effects at the same time. Resultantly, the arguments I forward and the stories I share here are as much about the operation of race as they are about the organisation of gender, the effects of class, or the construction of able-bodiedness. At the same time, of course, a shortcoming of this approach is the fact that identities are processual and temporal, rather than categorical, and that our formation as subjects does not occur in discrete and analytically distinct ways (Brown, 2005). My own work here, however, mediates this by paying attention to how people are interpellated as a specific identity within a specific context, rather than assuming that such identities are fixed or unchanging across time and space.

Affect theory, the second theoretical approach I employ, gives an account of how affects, emotions, and feelings produce subject positions and relationships and, thus, the social world. This literature thus posits affects to be social entities, rather than personal and individual ones. Such an approach allows us to understand several questions more clearly, including how subjectivities and communities are crafted through "affective economies" (Ahmed, 2004) rather than reason alone. How affect makes ideology stick and produces ties with actual flesh-and-blood bodies (Sedgwick, 2003).

How affect in the present is linked to the past, thus giving present practices the weight of history (Tadiar, 2004). How affect is intrinsic to the reproduction of (neo)liberal capitalism (Cvetkovich, 2012; Massumi, 2002). And how an analysis of affect will allow us to more clearly see how governmentality works (Povinelli, 2006).

Brian Massumi, one of the leading affect theorists writing today, proposes a distinction between emotion and affect in which the former is socialised, individualised, and expressed in language and gesture, and the latter is autonomous, pre-social, and non-rational (Massumi, 2002). For my project here I make no such distinction, for the simple reason that it does not move my analyses into other, more interesting, directions.[13] Instead, I follow Hardt's (2007) assertion that affect is a synthesis between mind and body as well as reason and passion. And like Cvetkovich (2012), I also use *affect* in a generic way to describe affects, emotions, feelings, as well as impulses and desires, that are both historically constructed *and* somatic and sensory and thus not always reducible to cognitive concepts and constructions alone.

I employ affect theory because my fieldwork made it clear to me that the decisions my interlocutors made and would make (vis-à-vis childcare and future-making) were both rational *and* emotional and intuitive. As Skoggard and Waterston (2015: 11) puts it, "human beings are as much feeling creatures as they are thinking ones. Hunches and intuition play a major role in reasoning, and passion provides impetus for action." In an effort to circumvent the unnecessary and problematic binary between the rational and the emotional, the use of affect theory thus proves fruitful. Finally, looking at affect – especially the sharpness of particular affects and emotions in particular contexts or events – might also give me a deeper sense into how different futures are valued, feared or lusted after, although this should not be taken to mean that affects are more "authentic" than decisions that were carefully reasoned. Either way, affect theory offered me the tools to come to grips with and analyse the data with which I emerged from my fieldwork.

Among the strengths of this approach has been that it allows me to focus on the ordinary (Stewart, 2007) and then to make connections between the ordinary and broader public feelings and

[13] Although I do not differentiate between emotion and affect for pragmatic reasons, see Leys (2015) for a more in-depth examination of why this distinction cannot conceptually be sustained.

discourses that circulate when it comes to care and future-making, and to do so with a critical eye. It has also enabled me to pay attention to the sometimes fleeting aspect of affect, and thus to be continually on the lookout for how things change, not simply month to month, for example, but also moment to moment. On the other hand, a weakness of this approach has been that some affect theorists often attempt to make a distinction between emotion and reason in order to valorise the former because it has been unfairly sidestepped in favour of the latter (Leys, 2015: 455-458). My own work here, however, counters this tendency by illustrating that in everyday life and conversation the two cannot always or easily be disentangled from one another.

On Methods

One of my primary methods of investigation was participant-observation. Perhaps the key approach to data collection in anthropology, it emerges out of Malinowski's (2005 [1922]) insistence that the anthropologist must immerse themselves in the lives of others to provide a cogent account of those lives and the social worlds they are entangled with. It is thus premised on coming to know people in their own social contexts, and accounting both for those contexts as well as the specific practices and relations through and within which people live and make meaning. In the context of my own research, this kind of "deep hanging out" (Geertz, 1998) took place, intermittently, over an eight-month period between March and October 2018 and was performed at my interlocutors' homes and workplaces, as well as stores, coffee shops, parks, and other locations across Cape Town. Sometimes this would mean spending an afternoon with Rachel and her children at her home, having an after-work drink with Nema, or taking a walk with Thandiwe and her son on the Sea Point promenade on a Saturday morning.

I employed participant-observation primarily because it allows the anthropologist to become "the tool through which knowledge is gained" and hinges both on subjective and objective approaches to data-gathering (Ross, 2010: 10). It also allowed me to see the difference (if such a difference exists) between what people do and what they say they do, and to personally observe and account for the rules, reasons, and histories that may underpin people's narratives and practices, but which may otherwise be unspoken or unacknowledged. In this vein, it allowed me, much more than formal interviews, to spend time with and have casual conversations with people in the spaces where life and care take place. As an

approach to being "in the thick of things", participant-observation was thus crucial to understanding the heterogeneity through which people attempt to craft lives and futures in accordance with their ideals.

Despite its many advantages, doing participant-observation in the context of my research project has not been easy. In fact, it has often been very arduous and time-consuming: both to myself, since I was working three part-time jobs while doing this research, as well as to my interlocutors, most of whom had full-time careers and were the primary caregivers to small children who require much care and attention. I also noticed that my most "successful" spells of participant-observation occurred with my interlocutor who was not employed and thus had more time to spend with me; there is something very odious about a research method whose success depends on economic precarity. Nevertheless, the intimacy built through spending time with people in contexts where they were most comfortable proved expedient and allowed me to build and (further) develop relationships that will extend beyond the completion of this project.

In addition to participant-observation, a second research method I made use of was life-history interviews. These are interviews in which people are asked to provide a personal account of their lives and to do so using their own words and timelines. Life-history interviews are premised on the assumption that the past inflects the present; in my own work, it also engages with how the past influences people's imaginings of the future. The primary goal of life-history interviews is to understand the individual within the context of their own lives, and then to situate their experiences within a broader social and historical context (Atkinson, 2002; Moore, 2013). Although the subjective nature of life histories mean that they tend to be selective, contingent upon what can be remembered and what is amenable to being told, the aim is not to be overly prescriptive in questioning, but rather to have people's narratives emerge naturally in light of the broader research questions that are posed.

As noted above, I employed life-history interviews primarily as a means of surfacing the ways in which my interlocutors' past experiences influence their imaginings of and hopes for the future. This connection between past and future was important for two key reasons. Firstly, because it allowed me to account for the fact that people's hopes and desires do not come from nowhere, but are instead often situated on a temporal continuum of how they understand and make sense of their past, present, and future. Secondly, given the relatively short nature of my fieldwork, conducting life-history interviews

also gave me some larger insight into my interlocutors' past experiences, experiences that I do not otherwise necessarily know about or have access to, given that I was situated in their present and having conversations with them about their future. Most of my life history interviews were two to three hours long and took place over two sessions.

One of the weaknesses of life-history interviews is the fact that they are not necessarily historically accurate, insofar as they function as a kind of text, with its own highlights and elisions, rather than a perfect representation of an external past reality (Crapanzano, 1977). These narratives also tend to be circumscribed by particular conventions of storytelling, such as the classical notion of beginning, middle, and end (Blackman, 1991). My fieldwork further indicated that for people who are not accustomed to reflecting on and talking about their own lives, who are not members of what has been called "therapeutic culture" (Madsen, 2014), such an interview can be difficult.[14] Nevertheless, I found life-histories useful because I am not interested in fact, but rather interested in meaning, and especially the kinds of meanings attached to past experiences, how they are perceived in the present, and whether or not they produce orientations toward or away from particular futures.

A third research method I made use of was vision boards. These are collages of photographs, drawings, and written text that are used to illustrate one's dreams, hopes, and desires and are often used for inspirational purposes. They form part of the methodological repertoire of visual anthropology and arts-based research practise and allow for the emergence of non-verbal data within the context of a research project (Rose, 2004). What is more, they also form part of what Edgar (2004) calls imagework, namely, projects that utilise visuality to provide expression to people's self-identities and worldviews and do so in a way that combines both rational and intuitive aspects of self. Despite being non-verbal, it nevertheless conveys people's accounts of themselves and the world around them, accounts which then provide data for the anthropologist to analyse and interpret.

I used vision boards because I reckoned that these might provide a useful, non-verbal, avenue through which my interlocutors could convey their active imagination, visualisation, and fantasies vis-à-vis their children's' futures and the hopes they have for these. Such vision boards could then be

[14]I mediated such difficulties by being patient and encouraging the interviewee with supportive phrases and questions, for example, "interesting, tell me more" or "oh wow, then what happened?"

analysed alongside data gathered through participant-observation, my interlocutors' past experiences as gleaned from life-history interviews, as well as my own analysis of the social and cultural understandings of parenting, hope, and futurity as these circulate in contemporary South Africa. This would prove expedient, especially since visual images are socially constructed (Pink, 2001) and indicative of "how we see, [and] how we are able, allowed, or made to see" (Foster, 1988), which means that such images can provide insight into broader socio-cultural values that might otherwise go unacknowledged.

Despite the strength of vision boards, a weakness is that unlike participation-observation and interviews, which required my interlocutors simply to be present and available to my inquiries, they ended up operating as a form of "homework" that was extraneous to our face-to-face research encounters. As a result, only two out of my six research participants worked on the vision boards, and with those that did, their vision boards were often incomplete. Both also featured personal information that meant that I could not photograph them for reproduction and dissemination here in this text. I would thus suggest that other researchers who use this method in future do it with or alongside their research participants. Nevertheless, the strength of the vision boards was that I was able to see how particular visions of social categories and forms organisation (especially of class) played out in what my interlocutors put down on their boards. It thus allowed them to communicate particular desires and hopes for the future, which I was then able to iteratively explore in follow up interviews.

On Ethics

Ethnographic research entails ethical consideration and an anticipation of the possibility of harm. Resultantly, I have attempted to craft an ethical praxis which seeks to both minimize personal harm during fieldwork, while simultaneously recognising the need to do justice to the complexity of my interlocutors' lives. I have thus closely followed the guidelines set out by *Anthropology Southern African* (2008) and used these guidelines as an ethical stratagem as I undertook my research. Key among these guidelines is the requirement of informed consent, which I attained from my interlocutors both before and after our research encounters, ensuring that they are aware that they may refuse to participate

or withdraw from the project at any point. I have also attempted to ensure confidentiality and anonymity by providing all my interlocutors with pseudonyms of their choosing.

Although ethics codes are useful for the practical guidance they provide, their 'checkbox' approach might often emerge as yet another instantiation of what has elsewhere been "audit cultures" (Strathern, 2000). My own ethical praxis has thus focused on what Castañeda (2006) has called the difference between "the morals of anthropology" and "the ethics of ethnography" – with the former linked to questions of ethnographic representations of the Other, and the latter linked to in-the-field relationships. The first part of this ethical praxis, linked to the question of representation, is that my work contains within it the risk of contributing to deficit discourses (Candlin and Crichton, 2011) which present the people being researched as the problem rather than the social contexts in which they are situated. Mothers and families are often intimately aware of the risks involved in care and child-rearing and the materialisation of a wholesome future. Deficit discourses work to view any shortcomings in this terrain as a "problem" to be "solved", rather than an implacable part of the messiness of human relationships and everyday life. This is especially salient in South Africa, where women, through the twentieth and into the twenty-first centuries, were and are often held solely accountable for their children's well-being and thus made vulnerable to maternal blame should anything adverse happen to those children (Pentecost and Ross, 2019: 751). To counter this, I have therefore attempted to write capaciously and hold social conditions, rather than individual persons, at the forefront of my analyses.

The second part of this ethical praxis, linked to in-the-field relations, is that my work held the possibility of encountering particular kinds of violence, such as sexual or domestic abuse, child negligence, or alcohol or drug use. There was also the possibility that the futures imagined by my interlocutors may, in fact, be harmful to their children. While South Africa's Children's Act of 2005 requires that professionals working with children immediately report instances of abuse to a child protection agency, the complications in such a move may have far-reaching, and perhaps even more detrimental, consequences. Fortunately, nothing intolerable emerged in my fieldwork and I have been able to build and/or extend personal relationships with most of my interlocutors. As a form of

reciprocity for taking part in my research, I gave each of them a gift consisting of a book and a card with a message of thanks.[15]

Finally, to add a note on reflexivity. Many of my interlocutors were friends, neighbours, and (former) colleagues. I have thus often had the experience of doing research "at home" as a "native anthropologist" (Narayan, 1993) in a context where their participation in my research – this favour they are doing me – would advance my career as a burgeoning anthropologist. Nevertheless, although I mostly worked with people who I knew well, our positionalities do not, of course, line up straightforwardly. Despite our points of connection (residential, professional, platonic), as a gay man who does not have children there are particular experiences that I did not have access to and, even if I did, may not think of as particularly salient. The arguments I make here are thus forms of "situated knowledge" (Haraway, 1988), given that who I am and how I have been shaped has affected what I was able to know and come to write about, though in ways, of course, that are not entirely transparent. Furthermore, as an anthropologist, I also have a very specific story to tell – namely, that the category of hope has conceptual usefulness for those interested in a critical anthropology because of its potential to unveil the mechanisms of power and inequality. If my writing here stays too close to this story at the expense of others it is not because I believe that other stories could call my conclusions in question, but rather because I am not interested in the goal of epistemic mastery: we cannot know everything, it is impossible to tell the whole story, and perhaps rather arrogant to attempt to do so. The chapters that follow are thus a partial account, and I have no doubt that my interlocutors' lives are richer and far more complex than what I am able to demonstrate here. I ask my reader to bear these facts in mind as they read the rest of this text

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[15] There were also other forms of reciprocity during the course of my research. For example, whenever I visited Rachel's home, I always brought snacks (chips, chocolate, nuts, orange juice, fruit, and so on) for her sons. However, the books and cards noted here were the only gifts I explicitly framed as gifts.

CHAPTER 1

The Promise of Hope: A Literature Review

Introduction.

Since the early 2000s, there has been an ongoing effort to reclaim the category of hope in social theory. This effort arose initially as a response on the part of Euro-American social theorists to what they viewed as the decline of hope in progressive politics with the ascendancy of (neo)liberal capitalism after the fall of the Soviet Union (Miyazaki, 2004: 1). However, moving beyond this early concern as to the ethical content and consequences of hope, subsequent theorists have utilised the category to reflect on how people make life possible under conditions of precarity, while others have exploited it for epistemological renewal and its ability to counter the "paranoid theory" (Sedgwick, 2003) we have inherited from various critical theoretical traditions. On all accounts, however, hope is deployed as something people do, a practice wrought by particular histories and relationships and oriented toward particular futures and 'imaginative horizons'.

My interest in hope emerged during my research; I did not enter the field with it in my anthropological toolkit either as an analytic or a theory of the subject and society. Observing, listening to, and engaging in conversation with my interlocutors thus made hope and hopefulness visible as modes through which they talked about and worked toward the future. Bryant and Knight (2019) correctly point out that hope – as well as other orientations such as anticipation, expectation, speculation, potentiality, and destiny – are temporal trajectories through which the future becomes "real" in the present; they lend it its affective texture. Such orientations thus allow one to gain a foothold into the relationship between the future and action, providing a concrete way for thinking about how the future enfolds the present and the modes and reasons through which people prepare for it.

For this review, I have defined the scope of hope primarily by chronology and discipline. This is to say that most of the writings on hope to be referenced here have been produced within the last

thirty years and that the review thus excludes earlier writings on the topic[16]. Since it is not my aim to write a genealogy of the category, nor in my ability to write an exhaustive account of its usage, I have therefore focused on more recent texts while still recognising that the writers I do cite frequently reference these theoretical predecessors.[17] Furthermore, most of the writing on hope to be referenced here is drawn from anthropology. However, I also cite scholars working in philosophy, psychology, sociology, and literary studies. I do this out of recognition of the fact that the disciplines often cannot be so easily untethered from one another and may contain significant overlaps, and also because many non-anthropologists provide insights that are particularly useful to the questions I address throughout this dissertation.

This review is divided into three sections and is organised along some of the major trends in the literature on hope. First, I review the literature that posits hope as a quality or attribute of persons that grows or shrinks depending on prevailing social conditions. Next, I review the literature that posits hope as a moral claim toward the future in a contemporary context marked by terrorism, global warming, a rapacious neoliberal capitalism, and socio-economic precarity. Finally, I review the literature that posits hope as a reorientation of knowledge that allows for the imagination and emergence of situations other than that which we are currently located in. Though I set these three bodies of knowledge off from one another for structural purposes, I should note that the writers referenced here continually cite one another despite their divergent theoretical and empirical commitments. I will thus aim to reproduce some of this dialogue.

Hope and the Relational Subject

To call hope a quality or attribute of persons is not to say that hope is an innate feature – or an essence – of the human subject. Indeed, hope as an orientation toward the future grows and shrinks in response to prevailing social conditions and thus hinges on interactions and interlocutions with particular historical, political-economic, and social regimes and relationships. The dimensions of these

[16] Per Crapanzano (2003), notable early examples would include R.R. Marett's *Faith, Hope, and Charity in Primitive Society* (1932), Ernest Bloch's *The Principle of Hope* (1986), and Henri Desroche's *Sociology of Hope* (1980).

[17] Hirokazu Miyazaki's *The Method of Hope* (2004), for example, owes a major debt to Ernest Bloch's work.

interactions and interlocutions come in multiple forms: they can be as great as the relationship between the state and the political subject, or as intimate as the relationship between the subject and their own body, and what that body is, can do, or can offer. Therefore, despite the impression of hope as a feature that is lodged in the individual body and psyche, it is instead, as I show below, a product of relationality, a precipitate of what it means to move through the world as a human being.

Crapanzano (2003) elaborates this argument, firstly, with reference to fieldwork conducted among white South Africans at the end of Apartheid, and secondly, via a close reading of Kenelm Burridge's ethnography of the cargo cult, *Mambo: A Melanesian Millennium* (1995). In the first account, hope "is the field of desire in waiting," (Crapanzano, 1985: 45) and emerges as an ambivalent affective response to a dying political system and the anticipated, but opaque and perhaps malevolent, dispensation that is expected to follow it. In the second, hope is both a response to European colonisation, as well as a transformation of a desire for European goods into ritual practice. Although hope arises as a passive undertaking in the former account (via waiting) and an active undertaking in the latter (via ritual), in both instances it is wrought by people's engagements with the legacy of colonialism.

Moving forward in time, Hage (2003, 2009) argues for the recognition of the unequal distribution of hope in Australian society, with hope consisting of collective visions of a meaningful and dignified life within that context. Inspired by Bourdieu's (1979) work in colonial Algeria,[18] Hage highlights how unequal social and economic processes produce and distribute temporal dispositions, such as hope. He, therefore, illustrates how the Australian state proffers the possibility of upward socio-economic mobility and the notion of "going somewhere in life", even as it leaves large sections of the population marginal and precarious, and thus with little hope and feelings of "stuckedness" (Hage, 2009: 97). Hope (and its absence) is thus shaped by the relationship between the state and its subjects, arising not as a discrete affect or disposition, but as a response to a certain mode of governmentality.

[18] Bourdieu's (1979) work in colonial Algeria can be described as a "political-economy of hope" (Kleist and Jansen, 2016) insofar as it analyses how hope is distributed based on people's relative position within a particular social, political, or economic context. In seeking to understand how and what people hope for within a particular social constellation, it also usefully highlights affect and temporality, since different subject-positions will produce different affective and temporal dispositions.

Such responses are detected into another, and perhaps more intimate, context by Reed (2011). Focusing on inmates in a Papua New Guinean prison awaiting legal judgment, he argues that *wetkot* (i.e. those on remand) are hopeful "not so much by disposition as by situation" and that hope is "less a condition of human persons and more a kind of force or power" (Reed, 2011: 533). He notes how *wetkot* do not work to keep hope alive, but rather see it as a necessary condition of being on remand, one continually thrust upon them by wardens, other convicts, legal representatives, and friends and relatives. This lays in contrast to the experiences of inmates who have already been sentenced, and who thus seem to have been abandoned by hope. Hope is therefore claimed or disavowed as an orientation toward the future depending on the social matrices in which subjects are situated in.

Similarly, experiences and practices of hope vis-a-vis health, illness, and the body also emerge within the context of a vast network of social relations. Good, Good, Schaffer, and Lind (1990: 60) argue that the hopes of patients, family caregivers, and clinicians often "articulate … with a society's cultural interpretation of hope". This suggests that metanarratives about optimism and the future can give shape to patient-clinician and patient-caregiver understandings and discussions about hope. This, however, can be a burden if people adopt a hopeful stance only because it is socially required, or if they do so in the face of a grim prognosis or an illness or disability that is chronic or incurable (Antelius, 2007; Mattingly, 2010). Hope is thus shaped by and circulates among various subjects, even when only employed to make sense of and respond to the physical changes or deterioration of an individual body.

In sum, the literature cited above usefully makes the case for viewing hope as an attribute of persons, but one that is produced in relation to the social matrices within which people exist in the world. As an orientation toward the future, hope is thus not so much an effect of individual wilfulness, but an outcome of interactions with history, contemporary forms of governmentality, specific institutions, such as the prison or the hospital, and specific situations, such as illness. One of the advantages of this literature lies in its contention that hope, as an affective practice, is not constant, but rather grows and shrinks and thus changes alongside the social relations that gave rise to it in the first place. This is one of the underlying assumptions of theorists who view hope as a political claim needed for present-day context marked by crisis and unpredictability, a literature I review in the next section.

Hope in the Face of Horror

The idea that hope is an antidote to conditions indisposed to human flourishing has a long social, political, and intellectual history. From Christianity to *The Communist Manifesto*, hope has been a hallmark of the interregnum between *what-is* and *what-might-be*. Moreover, in the social sciences, the notion of 'hope in the face of horror' can often be traced, albeit implicitly, in accounts of agency and resistance.[19] In anthropology, for example, ethnographic inquiry has long been marshalled to look for 'hopeful moments' in conditions where people live under state-led or historically-given forms of violence and oppression. The literature I review below, however, goes one step further. In a global context marked by crisis and uncertainty, these authors argue that hope is so scarcely distributed that assuming a hope stance toward the future is a moral claim and an assertion of a certain kind of progressive politics.

In their review of the aforementioned literature, Kleist and Jansen argue that it emerges out of "a widespread sense of crisis and a heightened sense of lack of political and ideological direction in this situation" (2017: 374). They highlight a range of events that have contributed to this, including global terror attacks (9/11, the London bombings), responses to those terror attacks (the War on Terror and its military interventions), new terrorist movements (Al-Shabaab, Boko Haram, ISIS), violent natural disasters (earthquakes in El Salvador and Haiti, the Indian Ocean Tsunami, Hurricane Katrina), possible pandemics (H1N1, Ebola), the global financial crisis of 2008-2009, the European migrant crisis of 2015, and so on. Kleist and Jansen (2017) caution, however, by saying that the world has not necessarily become *more* precarious, crisis-ridden, or uncertain, but rather that public debate and media discourse has "framed"[20] it as such.

[19] See Ortner (1995) for a discussion on the use of the category of "resistance" in and outside anthropology.

[20] Kleist and Jansen's use of the notion of "framing" is drawn from Judith Butler's work on the frames of war (2009). Frames are ideas that fashion a shared understanding of events and conditions and offer a common - though by no means uncontested - lens for interpretation and representation. Frames are "productive, shaping interpretations of reality, and they are politically saturated" (Kleist and Jansen, 2016: 374). It is important to recognise that frames are socially constructed, not only to get a clearer sense of the undeclared interests which often underwrite them, as Kleist and Jansen (2016) point out, but also to grasp at what they obscure or displace. An emphasis on precarity and vulnerability as *recent* socio-political forms, for example, erases the centuries of precarity and vulnerability experienced by Black and First Nations people as a result of colonialism, genocide, and slavery from the fifteenth century onward. My thanks to Kharnita Mohamed for this insight.

Whatever the world's actual ontological status in this regard, a wide range of social theorists have contributed to a debate on hope that follows this line of thinking. One strain of this work centres on a need for hope in critical theory and progressive politics in the face of these crises and uncertainties (Ahmed, 2004; Brown, 1999; Buck-Morss, 2000; Harvey, 2000; Lowe, 2001; Zournazi, 2003), while another focuses more specifically on the changing nature of capitalism and the insecurities it gives rise to (Berlant, 2011; Brown, 2015; Guyer, 2007; Williams, 1989), while yet another sets its attention on hope in the context of specific conflicts, social inequalities, and transformations (Cooper and Pratten, 2015; Jansen, 2013; Johnson-Hanks, 2005; Narotzky and Besnier, 2014). For all these theorists, hope is an orientation toward the future laden with political implications, given a contemporary moment marked by social and economic precarity.

The necessity for hope is highlighted firstly for its ability, however piecemeal, to bring alternative political futures into view. In this sense, the accounts offered by many of the authors noted above dovetail with the later return of hope to politics, as seen, for example, in Barack Obama's 2008 presidential campaign and its slogan "Yes We Can", the Arab Spring movements in 2010, the global Occupy movements in 2011, and South Africa's own #MustFall movements in 2015. The necessity of hope is highlighted on another score for its oblique relation to capitalism itself, since if the speculative, hopeful, spirit is part of contemporary financial capitalism, then undoing capitalism's ruin will also require a speculative, hopeful, spirit (Harvey, 2000; Gibson-Graham, 2006; Tsing, 2015). Hope and the projects it births (be they theoretical or activist) is thus an antidote to the very conditions which instigate hopelessness in the first place.

Nevertheless, at the same time as recognising the usefulness of hope to progressive politics and social theory, many theorists in this literature also recognise its disadvantages, or at least its links to efforts and ideas inimical to a healthier and more prosperous future. Berlant (2011) calls this "cruel optimism", in other words, affective attachments to, or hopes and desires for, projects, objects, or relations that might actually serve as an obstacle to one's flourishing. An example of this is the modernist metanarrative of progress and its promise of "improvement" (Li, 2007). It has shaped many a political imaginary and people's understandings of temporality, animating their hopes and dreams and

turning them into "conscripts of modernity" (Scott, 2004), even as it offers ever-decreasing returns (Ferguson, 1999), especially in a global context marked by greater needs and fewer and fewer resources.

In sum, the literature cited above makes the case for viewing hope as an orientation toward the future with moral and political underpinnings and required for a contemporary world marked by instability and uncertainty, especially vis-à-vis a rapacious neoliberal capitalism, increasing global warming, and the continuation of forms of oppression rooted in identity. Hope is here not only the locus of human agency but a practical endeavour through which to resist and undo the systems and processes which, following Hage (2003), distribute hope unevenly in the first instance. In other words, this literature asserts that hope, as an affective practise, can stimulate speculative attempts to "live otherwise" (Povinelli, 2011) and in this way bring alternative futures and lifeworlds into view. This is one of the key tenets of theorists who posit hope as a method that reorientates knowledge, literature I review in the following section.

Hope as a Method of Knowledge Formation

If the orthodox way of apprehending hope has been as an object of analysis, then the shift to hope-as-method holds several consequences. The first of these is that hope is no longer viewed only as an affect or emotion, or even a positive sense of expectation. The second is that hope is not assumed to have any predetermined locus, purpose, or end-goal. The third, and perhaps most important, is that hope is no longer simply something social theorists analyse, but rather something that is part-and-parcel of their own practice. The literature I review below thus makes the argument that hope-as-method is something social theorists either should do or already do and that the consequences of this is not only a shift in our understanding of what hope is or might be but also a contribution to epistemological renewal and alternative ways of doing anthropology and social theory.

Miyazaki (2004) brings the philosophy of Bloch (1986) into conversation with his ethnographic study of the land claims of the Savavou people in Fiji to argue that hope is a method of knowledge formation. He analyses how hope is utilised by Bloch as a technique with which to understand the shortcomings of Western metaphysics. Likewise, he examines how hope is used by the Savavou people as a way of cultivating knowledge of the self in the face of forms of governmentality that denies their

history. In uniting these different forms of knowledge formation which on their surface seem radically dissimilar, Miyazaki argues that hope is the common method through which actors are able to come to terms with their present moment of not knowing, reorientate their knowledge, and through this propel themselves forward to a search for an alternative, the "not-yet" that Bloch (1986) argues lay beyond the limits of our knowledge.

Later, Miyazaki (2006) points out that social theorists have been using hope-as-method without explicitly stating it as such, or perhaps even recognising it as such. Comparing the hopes of Japanese finance traders with theorists immersed in critiques of capitalism, he shows how hope-as-method operates in both groups, despite their differing epistemological, ideological, and material positions. This is because hope is what enables them to reorientate their knowledge and search for alternatives at the very moment at which their knowledge has failed them – such as when a trader's deal does not come to fruition, or a theorist's critique of capitalism is no longer effective to political organising. Once this reorientation has taken place, new forms of knowledge, practice, and ways of doing are sought and cultivated, whether new technologies and approaches in finance or new forms of critique.

Miyazaki's (2004, 2006) notion that hope-as-method reorientates one's knowledge and propels one toward searching for alternatives not yet borne dovetails with Appadurai's (2004; 2013) argument that a focus on the future might reinvent anthropology and its key concept, culture, through a focus on people "capacities to aspire". It also resonates with Sedgwick's (2004) repudiation of "paranoid theory" (i.e. theory that either claims to know everything in advance or treat everything as an opportunity to perform what Paul Ricoeur has called 'the hermeneutics of suspicion') through its openness toward uncertainty. And finally, it connects with Stewart's (2007) call for an understanding of the social world that is not static and authoritative, but attuned to ongoing ordinary processes, moments, and turns that might escape our orthodox analytical frameworks and routine ways of theorising and writing. Hope-as-method is thus entwined with efforts that beckon new and different kinds of intellectual experimentation.

Such efforts, Miyazaki (2004) points out, will allow us to produce concepts that are commensurate with our interlocutors' own analytics, such as his notion of "replication" drawn from Savavou practices. This is because the openness that hope-as-method foregrounds is predicated on the

suspension of a commitment to the anthropological canon in order to find other ways of describing and analysing the world. It thus also has resonances with what has recently been called "recursive anthropology" (Holbraad, 2012) and "the ontological turn" (Holbraad and Pederson, 2017), where the anthropologist's only *a priori* is their commitment to having no *a prioris*, and ethnographic materials are not only meant to be described and analysed but also employed to alter the very terms of anthropological inquiry, especially in those instances where the tools of anthropological inquiry cannot do justice to the ethnographic materials (Holbraad, 2017: 275).

In sum, the literature reviewed above views hope as a method of knowledge production and scholarly renewal. Hope, it argues, is what allows us to reorientate our knowledge toward the unknown and "not-yet" and through this not only apprehend our current ways of knowing as faltering, but also search for alternatives with both a sense of potentiality and uncertainty, and then experiment with different forms of understanding the world through the forms of analysing, theorising, and writing we employ. Hope's tentative yet forward-looking stance is thus honoured, and it is not simply understood as an outcome of past processes or contemporary regimes, or necessarily usable only for a particular kind of critique, but rather applicable to a range of different endeavours, political and intellectual projects, and social contexts.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have reviewed the different ways in which hope as an orientation toward the future has been deployed in anthropology specifically and the social sciences more generally. This work has followed three paths. The first focuses on hope as an outcome of social relations, one that shrinks and grows depending on prevailing social conditions and relationships. The second focuses on hope as an orientation needed to strengthen progressive politics and counter the social, political, and economic conditions that are inimical to human flourishing. The third and final focusses on hope as a method of knowledge, as something that reorientates our current way of knowing and provides directionality toward other epistemological positions. On all three accounts, the focus on hope is processual, not categorial, asking not what hope is but what it does, what worlds and understandings of worlds it allows us to imagine and bring into being.

The four ethnographic chapters that follow will situate my project at the intersection of all three the abovementioned approaches but will attempt to move them in other directions. Firstly, I will argue that hope is not only produced by past or prevailing social relations but can also be read as an index of those social relations, a place where a cluster of histories, intimacies, and socio-political processes congregate and are then marshalled to bring a futural 'otherwise' into being. Secondly, I will indicate that hope, contra its use in some Marxist (Harvey, 2000) and feminist (Ahmed, 2004) analyses, is not inherently positive or usable for progressive politics, given that it is vulnerable to the vicissitudes of the social world and can also be invested in projects that do not or cannot ensure individual and collective flourishing. And finally, I will indicate that hope does offer a method of knowledge formation, but one that more fruitfully tells us about how social life is currently structured and organised, rather than what it might or ought to be.

My arguments rest on an examination of how hope exists in specific times and places, rather than the assumption that it is the same across contexts. It counters the tendency to view hope as uniformly positive or expedient by showing its entanglement with projects that may revivify, rather than contest, orthodox social norms and arrangements. It illustrates that hope is both an outcome of prior conditions (and thus connected to the past) *and* attendant to action and the building of an otherwise (and thus oriented toward the future). And finally, it reveals how hope not only reorientates knowledge, but also enables other reorientations that contribute to individual and social transformation. Like Crapanzano (2003), my aim across the following ethnographic chapters is to point toward and further delineate the usefulness of hope as concept for social, and specifically anthropological, analysis.

CHAPTER 2

An Archive of Longings

Introduction

How do former worlds shape the style or substance of prospective worlds and in what ways do such processes shift across time and space? In this chapter, I perform a comparative analysis between the hopes of two of my interlocutors and Stef Jansen's *Yearnings in the Meantime* (2017), an ethnography of desires for "normal lives" in post-socialist Bosnia and Herzegovina. My basis for comparison is yearnings for what Jansen describes as "ordinary objects", namely, items, institutions, and relations that are imagined to be commonplace entities but are in fact, in contexts of structural deprivation, highly unobtainable. My juxtaposition here of societies that are geographically dispersed and materially disparate should not indicate a comparative analysis in search of origins, nor an engagement with some obscene notion of "progress". Rather, what I want to do is to surface how both our interlocutors' hopes reveal the specifics of place and the workings of power across disparate contexts.

Jansen argues that his interlocutors' desires for "normality" emerge out of their reflections on life as lived before the Bosnian War in the 1990s, reflections which then generate certain aspirations for the future. This is akin to what I perceived in my own fieldwork, namely, the notion that former lifeworlds informed the hopes people had for the future. Where Jansen and my insights diverge, however, is that while his interlocutors view the past as a time in which they had "normal lives", and thus a spatio-temporal zone which they hope to revivify in the future, my interlocutors held no such inclinations. Rather, their hopeful horizons often functioned as a sharp repudiation of the past, an affective mode that is, I argue, diagnostic of the specifics of South African place and history. The facts of colonialism and Apartheid, and their devasting material and emotional consequences for Black people, mean that the Black women in my study have no desire to craft a future that in any way mimics the past.

This is contra to Jansen's white European research participants, for whom the pre-1990s socialist period was not a timespace always or only defined by violence, precarity, or meagre access to

resources and opportunities. The hopes delineated in both our ethnographic accounts are thus deeply revealing of the specifics of place. More pertinently, mine reveal histories of exclusion and deprivation that highlight continuities with the past, even as they also indicate a shift in some aspects of the structure of South African life. Included here is the "horizon of expectation" (Koselleck, 2004) inaugurated by post-1994 political freedom, the sense that opportunities are available, that one can access them and thus ascend the socio-economic ladder provided one has the skills and wits to do so. This bootstrap fantasy of self-authorizing freedom is, however, continually interrupted or deferred by intractable socio-political and economic issues, and thus indexical of the workings of power in contemporary South Africa.

This chapter is divided into three sections. In the first section, I provide an overview of Jansen's *Yearnings in the Meantime* (2017), paying particular attention to his conceptualisation of "ordinary objects" and his use of the temporal markers "was", "is", and "ought" and the relation he highlights between the first and last of these terms. In the second and third sections, I turn to the hopes of my interlocutors Angela and Hlumile, respectively, and show how their hopeful experiences resonate with those highlighted by Jansen (2017), insofar as they collectively provide instances of hopes held for "ordinary objects" that are, in contexts of material scarcity, quite extraordinary. At the same time, however, I show how my interlocutors' experiences diverge from those highlighted by Jansen, insofar as South African political history has rendered the past an entity to be repudiated, rather than, as in Jansen's study, something people desire to revive.

"Was", "Is", "Ought": Stef Jansen's *Yearnings in the Meantime*

In *Yearnings in the Meantime* (2017), the anthropologist Stef Jansen grapples with the question of hopes for "normal lives" and a "normal state" in a time and place when neither is available. Based on fieldwork conducted in Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Jansen's ethnography illustrates that people often equate "normal lives" with the presence of state-provided infrastructure that is predictable, dependable, and accessible. People, therefore, desire "grids" of various kinds that suggest "normality" and allow them to "get on" with their lives – with "grids" here taken to refer to James C. Scott's (1998) concept of the myriad ordering frameworks in modern society, from transport, to the monetary system, to

identity documentation. Because of the absence of a fully-functioning state, and thus the absence of these grids, people feel as though their lives are not normal or moving forward, alluding to the "stuckedness" Hage (2003) has written about elsewhere.

Jansen characterises this absence of hope and the feeling of malaise as "Daytonitis" or the "Dayton Meantime", in reference to the Dayton Accords – a 1995 peace agreement reached near Dayton, Ohio in the United States, and signed in Paris, France a few months later – which put an end to the three-and-a-half-year Bosnian War, one of the Yugoslav wars that broke out in the aftermath of the disintegration of the Soviet Union and its allied Communist States. Although this agreement brought formal peace to the people of Sarajevo and the region more generally, the political and institutional formations it wrought did not bring about a *bona fide* material improvement in people's lives. Continuing disagreements of the questions of *statehood* delayed the veritable production and distribution of *statecraft*, i.e. the policies and social projects that are indicative of "what the state does, claims to do, and should do," (Jansen, 2017: 12).

Jansen aims to write against what he calls the "libertarian tradition" in anthropology, which he argues is exemplified by the work of James C. Scott and David Graeber and which is premised on an epistemology that holds the state to be inherently oppressive. He thus indicates that the end of the Bosnian War instituted a "horizon of anticipation" (Koselleck, 2004) in the people with whom he worked, one which compelled them to desire the state and state-based frameworks and institutions, rather than repudiate these as oppressive. Where Scott (1998), for example, might view the extension of state-based gridding practices and infrastructures as attempts by bureaucratic administrators to dominate the polity, Jansen instead argues that such gridded infrastructures are what enable a "normal life", insofar as they allow, or provide the condition of possibility for, people to go about their everyday lives and routine practices.

Jansen provides two incisive examples with which to illustrate his argument. The first, in people's frustration with the chaotic and unpredictable local transport system, and the second, in their attempts to maintain and continue the schooling of children during the Bosnian War. In both instances, he shows how, in the absence or breakdown of such forms of gridding (which would otherwise be state-provided), the residents in Sarajevo with whom he worked exhibited a "grid desire", a yearning for lives

calibrated by certain forms of institutionalised predictability. These forms thus not only provided the groundwork on which people could map their lives, daily routines, and hopes for the future, but also furnished them with the basis upon which they could mobilise their agentive capacities and craft the kinds of "normal lives" they desired.

Jansen further cites Fehérváry (2002) on the question of what counts as "ordinary" for those desiring "normal lives". Fehérváry (2002: 370) argues that in much of the post-Soviet region, the objects, practices, and standards of living that are thought and spoken of as "ordinary" are, given the prevailing socio-political and material circumstances, quite extraordinary and "yet are imagined to be part of 'average' lifestyles in western Europe or the United States". Jansen suggests that this equation of "normality" and the "ordinary" with the material and political conditions of Europe and the West is part of a broader desire in many post-Soviet states to (once again) belong to the political communities those words refer to and to be (re)integrated in "normal Western-capitalist" dynamics which are imagined as having been interrupted by the "abnormality" of Communism during much of the twentieth century.

At the same time, however, Jansen also points out that the desire to escape the "Dayton Meantime" and cultivate alternative futures did not entail a straightforward valorisation or reproduction of western European liberal democratic capitalism. He illustrates how many of his interlocutors yearned for an otherwise through a particular kind of temporal regime, premised on a "was", "is", and "ought". The first ("was") refers to life prior to the war, during the socialist period, when state-provided infrastructure and service delivery, whatever its quality, was regular and able to fulfil people's basic needs. The second ("is") refers to the prevailing socio-temporal conditions in which people are situated, and which they find wanting and in need of improvement. The final ("ought") refers to people's desires for normality, routine, and forms of statecraft upon which they can build their futures, desires which themselves have a relation to the past ("was") because it is often figured as a return to when things were normal, routine, and when statecraft was provided. Jansen, therefore, illustrates that hopes for the future are both produced by a "horizon of anticipation" (Koselleck, 2004) instituted by a certain historical conjunction (post the Bosnian War), and entail a kind of backward-looking stance through which people understand what the good life is or ought to be.

Wanted: Ordinary Objects

In the following paragraphs I want to take up one aspect of Jansen's work, namely how hopes for "normal lives" entail the figuration of "ordinary" objects. Jansen notes early in his ethnography that his own fieldwork – and local research conducted by various other bodies, such as the media – illustrated that "most people wanted jobs, proper health care, a stop to crooked privatisation and other corruption, a fairer distribution of resources, quality education, a functioning administration, an effective judicial apparatus, and so on" (2017: 13). "Normal lives" are thus constitutive of a range of "ordinary" objects, even as the prevailing shape of socio-political life does not always or ever make these possible. It is this line of thinking that emerged in my own work and that I want to explore here.

When I visited Angela in October 2018, she wanted to get out of the house. Instead of her living room, which had served as our prior meeting space, she suggested we take a drive to Tygervalley Shopping Centre in Durbanville. There she and I did bits of shopping before sitting down for a late lunch at Ocean Basket.[21] In the empty smoking section, she told me that things looked a lot less hopeful than our first interview (in April of that year). Back then she was still on an extended maternity leave, having "retired" from work and divested her pension from her prior place of employment, a major local medical aid company. The plan she and her husband had set out was that they would use this money to cover their debt, buy a few new household items, and allow her to spend at least one or two years at home as a stay-at-home mother with her new daughter Lindsay, given that she did not spend much time with her eldest son Andrew, then aged six, when he was a baby.

The reason for her lack of hope was that her husband was not, in the months between our first and last interview, able to secure a permanent, well-paying job, and was still working as a bookkeeper-cum-inventory manager at his cousin's garage. This was despite the fact that he had, a year prior, graduated with distinction with a degree from the UCT School of Business here in Cape Town. Given this, she had now had to return to working full-time since his salary at the garage would not be enough to sustain their family. Her frustration at his failure to secure better employment was thus compounded with her disappointment in having to leave her daughter and return to working full-time. Her hopes for

[21] A local chain of seafood restaurants.

her immediate future were shot, and the long-term future looked much more uncertain. It palpably affected her. “I’m just so tired,” she said. She felt like she could not catch a break.

For Angela, what constituted the “ordinary” was similar but different to what Jansen (2017) notes above. In our first interview, she had complained, “I just want to get out of this place,” referring to Bishop Lavis on the Cape Flats, where she has lived most of her life.[22] She noted that her children cannot play outside because of rampant gang violence, the local library’s selection of texts is deficient, her son has to go to school thirty minutes away because local schools tend to perform poorly, and, perhaps most amusingly, if she wants Portobello mushrooms she has to drive twenty minutes to Parow, where the closest Pick ‘n Pay[23] is located. She was thus, in essence, complaining about what it is like to live in a township, about its shortcomings, and its meagre resources and amenities. Her grievances suggest how Apartheid spatial planning and an unequal, trickle-down economy impinge on people and their ability to craft lives and futures in accordance with their ideals, desires, and aesthetic aspirations.

She and her husband had hoped that whatever employment he would find after his graduation would give him a pay-increase big enough to allow them to move out of their current home and neighbourhood, “maybe not somewhere fancy but at least somewhere where your neighbours aren’t constantly asking you for R10 for bread which they then use to buy beer”. This last comment is indicative of her location in an unpleasant gift economy, where hunger and alcoholism go side-by-side and she and her family, despite their own financial insecurity, are viewed as being financially comfortable and thus able to support others. Furthermore, her desires for a socio-spatial otherwise is interesting insofar as the things she lusts after, she asserted, should not be particularly extraordinary: a safe place for her children to play, a good school close to home, satisfactory amenities, and so on.

Like Jansen’s ethnography, Angela’s story thus suggests how an economy of scarcity operates – by foreclosing the realisation of fairly ordinary needs and desires, and by turning the benign, the bucolic, and the convenient into extraordinary objects that are within view but not within reach. Her hopes, therefore, resonate with some of the yearnings held by Jansen’s (2017) and Fehérváry’s (2002)

[22] Angela and her husband briefly rented a house in Ruyterwacht, a more well-off neighbourhood in another part of Cape Town. However, they moved back to Angela’s father’s home in Bishop Lavis when her husband enrolled at the UCT Business School, as they could not afford both their monthly rent and his tuition fees.
[23] A local chain of supermarkets.

interlocutors, insofar as they hold the ownership of or access to certain objects to be constitutive of "normal lives". However, in the absence of such "ordinary objects" because of widespread material scarcity, lives are felt to be abnormal and thus temporarily "on hold" – a position that both alludes to Jansen's designation of the Dayton Meantime, and Angela's sense of stuckedness in the face of the collapse of her hope for upward mobility. Of course, the hopes of my interlocutors not only held echoes of those described by Jansen but also diverge from them, a divergence that reveals the specifically South African character of these hopes.

Against The Past

In his ethnography, Jansen (2017) fleshes out a temporal regime premised, as noted earlier, on "was", "is", and "ought", indicating that people's hopes for the future often entailed a kind of backward-looking stance that seeks to revivify the past, since this was the time during which people had "normal lives". In my own fieldwork, this kind of temporalisation also emerged, but in a different way. Although my interlocutors reflected on the past, they did not deploy it as an image through which they could sketch a future alternative to the present. Instead, the past was repudiated and prospective futures were almost always conceived as its opposite. This is diagnostic, I argue, of the damaging effects colonialism and the Apartheid system had on Black South Africans, and why the Black women in my study have no desire to craft a future that in any way mimics the past. This came through most clearly in the story of my interlocutor Hlumile, who wanted to get her daughter into a private all-girls' school.

Through most of 2018, she would update me about her struggle to get her daughter into her school of choice for first grade in 2019. She and her husband's preferred school was a private all-girl's school in the Southern Suburbs here in Cape Town.[24] They applied there and at three other schools. Her daughter was rejected by all of them. She immediately called around, asking what was wrong, why her

[24] The school Hlumile was interested in sending her daughter to is one of the top performing schools in the city and the country, and thus an institutional rarity. Like other schools of its kind, it is located in an affluent suburb that was declared a whites-only residential district by the Apartheid government and therefore primarily catered to white students. In the post-Apartheid, however, the school and others like it have enrolled aspirant middle-class Black students, although transformation of institutional cultures tend to be slow. The furore over Black female students' hairstyles in a similar school in another part of the country is indicative of this, see here: https://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/aug/29/south-africa-pretoria-high-school-for-girls-afros

daughter did not get admitted, often to be told that it was because the girl "didn't make the criteria". When Hlumile would call and ask what the "criteria" was, she would be met with partial and often half-baked answers. She then called the Western Cape Education Department (WCED), the local schooling authority, to inquire as to what could be done: her daughter had fulfilled most, sometimes all, of the requirements for the schools they had applied for yet could not get admitted. "What am I supposed to do?" she asked me rhetorically, "Send my daughter to school in Khayelitsha or Gugulethu even though we live in Mowbray?"[25]

One afternoon in September 2018, she personally visited their first-choice school and was told yet another story: her daughter was on the waiting list. "It didn't make sense because we submitted the application long before the final due date." A former colleague of hers whose daughter is already enrolled at the school, and who serves on the governing body, let her in on a secret: she and a few other parents had formed a group that was petitioning against the school's prevailing admissions practices, since these were often premised forms of racism and class elitism. As Hlumile said: "Apparently a lot of it is about how much you earn, who you are and what your title is [for example, Dr, Prof, and so on], who you know, whether you're white or not. They don't like black South Africans, but they'll take blacks from other parts of the continent".

What I want to highlight here is not the reasons why (or why not) her daughter did not gain entry to the school. It is perfectly reasonable for a prestigious all-girls school to have a highly selective, and thus exclusionary, admissions process. In the same way, in a racist society like South Africa it is also reasonable to assume that a school which has historically catered to the daughters of the white upper classes would put in place measures, albeit clandestine, to maintain and reproduce white privilege and class elitism. What I want to highlight, rather, is how Hlumile's hope to get her daughter into this school is premised on the assumption that entry into such a school would be a run-of-the-mill endeavour, that applying to and attending it would be an "ordinary" activity, requiring only her daughter's competency and her own logistical efficacy; in other words, a straightforward meritocracy.

[25] Khayelitsha and Gugulethu are townships on the Cape Flats historically inhabited by black Africans. In drawing a distinction between these locations and Mowbray – a whites-only suburb under Apartheid – Hlumile is calling attention to the racist logic that would figure these locations as the "proper" places for her family to live and her daughter to attend school.

Like Angela before her, what she imagines to be "ordinary", what she hopes could be "normal" is, in light of histories of racial and economic exclusion, extraordinary and thus deeply unobtainable.

When I asked Hlumile why she would go through the trouble of getting her daughter into her first choice school – given the accusations of racism and class elitism levelled against it – she told me that she wanted her daughter to attend the school not only for the formal education it offered but also for the kinds of social and cultural capital she imagined her daughter would gain by attending such as school. She invoked the saying "the world is your oyster", noting that she wanted her daughter to have a "larger understanding" about what the world contains and the possibilities it holds. "You work at a university," she told me, "you've seen those private school kids. They're so confident because they know nothing is unreachable".

Furthermore, her hope that the school could be a route to an alternative future also hinges on her own past experiences. She reflected, during one interview, on how her first visit overseas was met with applause and adulation by her family, similar to what she received when she got into university, the first person in her family to do so. "It was such a big thing," she said, "they wanted to slaughter a cow.[26] Our social media was blowing up, Whatsapp was blowing up, and that's because we never saw these things as being reachable, as being attainable. And I don't want that for my daughters. I want them to know what possibilities are available to them." Her hopes communicate a desire to be ordinary and undistinguished, given that the shape and form of the local political economy have rendered her experiences so exceptional, made her an outlier rather than the norm. It is thus indicative of how, under Apartheid, economic possibilities and upward mobility were curtailed for Black people and how, despite changes in political power post-1994, this kind of economic oppression perdures into the present.

If Jansen's (2017) interlocutors seek to craft a future that mirrors the past, Hlumile's story here operates as a repudiation of the past, since it was a time-space in which the life-chances afforded to a woman such as herself were so horribly slender. The hopes she has for her daughters' futures therefore both emerge from a reflection on the past and stand in opposition to it, a stance that seeks to beckon an

[26] A ritual of thanks.

alternative future by engaging in particular kinds of labour in the present. What is more, her hope to get her daughter into the school, and the impossibility of that hope, is revealing of how inequality in contemporary South Africa works: forms of transformation collide with old hierarchies, racist logics are revivified in new forms, and the institutions white privilege underwrites are morally disavowed and yet pragmatically lusted after. Like Angela, what she imagines to be "ordinary" and what she hopes could be "normal" is instead rendered extraordinary or exceptional by a social world in which upward mobility for Black people cannot be taken for granted or assumed in advance.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I brought the hopes of my interlocutors Angela and Hlumile into conversation with Stef Jansen's *Yearnings in the Meantime* (2017), an ethnography of desires for "normal lives" in post-socialist Bosnia and Herzegovina. I illustrated that there are resonances between the stories that emerged in my fieldwork and those discovered by Jansen, insofar as both our interlocutors have desires for particular kinds of objects, institutions, and relations that they hope will generate for them a "normal life". At the same time, however, I illustrated that while Jansen's research participants desire a future that in some ways mimic the form and content of the past, mine do not. This is the result, I argue, of the fact that for the Black women in my research the past is so much defined by the presence of deprivation that it can only be opposed and repudiated, rather than reinhabited. The hopes I delineate here are therefore indexical of forms of power and inequality in contemporary South Africa, especially in their manifestation as spatial and racialised inequality. In the following chapter, I engage with the ways in which hopes are not simply orientated toward more abundant futures, but are also brought to bear on what I call "normative objects", relations and things who's social and material value are imagined to secure more comfortable futures.

CHAPTER 3

(Normative) Objects of Desire

Introduction

Over much of the last century, anthropologists, feminist, and queer theorists have continually examined and critiqued the heteropatriarchal nuclear family as a means to both render it relative and contingent and to indicate its capacity to serve as a site of oppression for women and queer people. This effort has correctly pointed out that the universalisation of this particular notion of the family not only prevents us from understanding other affinal relations on their own terms, but also contributes to socio-political discourses which delimit what forms of intimacy count as legitimate and thus worthy of state protection, recognition, or assistance. But what would it do to hold off on that critique for a moment and set our attention on why people might invest in normative notions of kinship and home, even as their status as hegemonic entities mean that they are capable of exclusion and domination? What would it reveal about the entanglement of gender, sexuality, property, and the work of survival in precarious contexts?

In this chapter, I argue that critiques of normative objects such as heterosexual marriage and private property often forget that some people have not always been able to inhabit these social forms, and so the investment in them, in fact, offers them the opportunity to refurnish these entities as generous, rather than oppressive, spaces. Drawing on the hopes of my interlocutors Rachel and Thandiwe, I illustrate how their attachment to particular notions of family and home perform what I call 'reparative work'. This is because such attachments allow them to craft more stable and materially abundant futures for their children. They undertake these projects in the face of their imbrication with personal histories of displacement, violence, and abandonment, and more prior socio-political arrangements that are inimical to Black family life and the cultivation of loving and stable kinship forms.

Their efforts, therefore, suggest that the desire for normative objects comes into being precisely because it provides people with an occasion to inhabit particular kinds of intimacies which they might not have had access to before. This is especially so in a context like South Africa, where normative prescriptions of what family life is or should look like have gone hand-in-hand with a political-economy

that makes it impossible for people to live up to such ideals. In crafting an attentiveness to the logic of why people might pin their hopes on, and make themselves subject to, such hegemonic forms, I thus further indicate the need to simultaneously keep love and self-interest, or the emotional form and the property form, in our analytic purview. The hopes delineated here are thus indexical not only of normative notions of "the good life" as these relate to kinship, but also diagnostic of the constellation of histories, socio-economic processes, and intimate desires that enable the investment in such notions in the first place.

This chapter is divided into three sections. In the first section, I provide a brief overview of some anthropological writing on kinship, sexuality, and domesticity and bring these into conversation with my interlocutor Rachel's hopes for her relationship with her boyfriend Pieter. In the second section, I turn to the notion of "reparative work", emphasising how the effects of settler colonialism on Black family life has inaugurated subsequent desires, as evinced by the hopes of my interlocutor Thandiwe, to reinvest family and private property with new, and possibly more just and caring, meanings. In the third and final section, I provide further insight into the connection between the making of family and the structure of the political-economy, indicating that my interlocutors' hopes often conjoin the two, thus collapsing the commonsensical division between affect and material property.

The Nuclear Family: A Fantasy

If earlier anthropological accounts of the family insisted on its universality (Malinowski, 1913), subsequent practitioners of the discipline have vigorously contested such notions as ethnocentric, particularly in their manifestation as common-sense understandings of kinship, home, and intimacy. Think of Radcliffe-Brown's (1940) delineation of ritualised "joking relationships" among different generations in Africa, or Weston's (1990) examination of forms of alternative kin-making among queer groups in North America, or Howell's (2006) account of the processes through which transnational adoptees (in)formally become members of their adopted families in Europe. In these texts and others, anthropologists have demonstrated globally the diverse modes through which people know and actualise notions of affinity, and thus unsettle assumptions that there is only one way in which to understand and construct the form and content of one's relatedness to others.

In our context and elsewhere, however, the heteropatriarchal nuclear family has often perdured as the normative mode of organising kinship and belonging. In other words, despite the empirical fact that what constitutes a "family" or "home" is frequently an assemblage of actors who may relate to one another in various biological and non-biological ways, social and political ideas about what the familial is, might, or should be, often "consecrate families only of certain substantive kinds, and they leave the rest abject," (Faubion, 2010: 10). Attempts to value the heteropatriarchal nuclear family above all others was a common feature of the colonial enterprise and its violent imposition of Eurocentric notions of the kinship (Amadiume, 2005; Stoler, 2001). It also continues in instances where contemporary nation-states politicise family, domesticity, and sexuality, and delimit which versions of these categories count as legitimate and thus worthy of state protection and recognition (Berlant, 1997; Mody, 2008; Povinelli, 2006). My point is *not* that the heteropatriarchal nuclear family is natural, universal, inevitable or ideal, but rather that it has been presented as such by various, and often overlapping, institutions and discursive regimes.[27]

The idealisation of this particular version of the family certainly occurred in my fieldwork. One afternoon at Rachel's house, as she was pouring orange juice for her sons, she began telling me about the "fantastic" weekend she had just spent with Pieter, her current boyfriend, and, she hoped, her future husband and father to her sons. They had met in 2010 when she worked as a cleaner at a bottling company in Epping, where he worked as one of the delivery men. She was standing at the kiosk during lunchtime one day, keen on buying a can of Fanta, but was R2 short. She asked him, the nearest person she could find, and he gallantly stepped in and bought the can for her. "We started talking and then ended up having lunch together most days," she said, "of course I stopped working there after a few

[27] I should point out that even in instances when adherence to the model of the nuclear family is not explicitly demanded, certain precepts about what kinds of intimate relations matter, and how, often permeate the realm of the political, such as in the delivery of social goods like public housing. Ross (2010), for example, illustrates how the post -1994 state's application process for public housing in Cape Town was able to accommodate the diverse kin relations South Africa's colonial and Apartheid history has produced, and yet still might have been underpinned by ideas about duration and temporal coherence that assume the presence of a stable nuclear family over time. Not only did this assumption have the effect of obscuring the complexity of people's actual relationships, it also induced a kind of moral panic as people attempted to nucleate and stabilise the fluidity of their kin relations, such as through marriage, in the hope that it might aid them in acquiring housing or securing housing subsidies (Ross, 2010: 82-87).

weeks – you know how I hate cleaning – and then we lost contact." They met again in December 2017, at a friend of a friend's braai[28] in Elsies River, and "[they've] been together ever since."

Their first and second meetings, of course, premised one key difference: the second time around she was a single mother of three children, her former partners and fathers to her children either dead or absent. He seemed, nevertheless, entirely unfazed by this, a quality that served as one of her key attractions to him. "He's a good man," she said, "there aren't a lot of men who'd take on a woman with three children. He takes care of us, gives me money when I need it for myself or the children, buys groceries. We were at Fruit & Veg City[29] last week and he bought a bunch of stuff – meat, potatoes, onions, rice, that kind of thing, stuff you need around the house. I'm very grateful." And there is more: "he likes to drink, likes to have a good time. This weekend, for example, we braaied at his house and bought a crate of Black Label [beer]. We listened to the Bee Gees, which I didn't like, but he liked because he likes that old music. It was really nice."

Her hope, as I mentioned earlier, is that their relationship will lead to marriage. When I had asked her the previous week what one thing she would still like to accomplish she said it was to be married. "It looks so nice, you know? I was a bridesmaid in Poppie's [her friend] wedding last month and it was so beautiful. And when I see Janine and Joshua when they visit Auntie Carol[30] I think to myself, 'I want that'. I want to feel what's it like to be married. To be married and have my own house, and car, and children. To live separately and not be dependent on my family. To live a respectable life." To this end, she is very concerned about pleasing Pieter and making their relationship flow as smoothly as possible. "I always make sure I am available to him. I'm not working right now, so it's easy. And I always make sure we have a good time".

Her desire for the ideal nuclear family, and her affective and temporal investment in her relationship with Pieter as a means to manifest this, is an instantiation of normative notions of kinship and intimacy as these take shape within local social worlds. The sentimentalisation of marriage we see in her discussion of Janine and Joshua is also symptomatic of this. So, too, is the assertion that she

[28] Barbeque
[29] A local chain of supermarkets.
[30] Auntie Carol is a neighbour of ours, Janine and Joshua are her daughter and son-in-law, respectively.

"always makes she she's available to him," which, in our discussion that day, sounded less like equal partners grappling with the logistics of their relationship and more like a woman shaping her life in accordance with her male partner's schedule. The affective investments Rachel is making in this relationship thus offers a road to contentment that could ultimately turn out to be a form of "cruel optimism" (Berlant, 2011), given that what seems to be a pathway to the good life might not, in fact, lead to her long-term personal flourishing, or at least not satisfy the fantasies of family and home that she places so much value onto.

Reparative Work

Nevertheless, the otherwise admirable task of critiquing normative notions of kinship forgets that people might invest in them precisely because they have not always been able to inhabit such forms. Black feminists have long pointed this out vis-à-vis the feminist project as a whole: bell hooks (1983), for example, critiques the second-wave feminist argument that home and family are oppressive to women because it does not allow them to fully make use of their productive capacities and that it might more fruitful for them to exit the home and enter the workforce. Although sympathetic to this argument in the first instance, hooks nonetheless points out that histories of slavery, colonialism, and segregation have often prevented Black families from cultivating stable and loving kinship forms, and so the commitment to building family might ultimately be a fulfilling, rather than oppressive, endeavour.

This is especially the case in South Africa, where white settler colonialism not only imposed Eurocentric notions of the family that pathologized the diverse kinship forms Black people themselves composed, but also instituted a political-economy that, in fact, made it impossible for them to live up to the ideals that colonial moral authorities proffered. Labour relations from slavery through the colonial era generated various kinds of dislocation that devastated the possibility of crafting stable kinship forms (Worden, 2014; Hall and Posel, 2019). These modes of displacement were extended through Apartheid's segregationist policies and practice of forced removals. They were also reproduced in the enactment of particular kinds of laws, such as the Prohibition of Mixed Marriages Act of 1949, the Immorality Act of 1950, and the Population Registration Act of 1950. These laws not only separated

family members with different phenotypical features but also made it difficult for mixed-race couples and their offspring to live together as coherent family units (Sherman and Steyn, 2009; Ratele, 2009).

It is these histories, and their attendant experiences of trauma, that occasion contemporary investments in normative objects such as the nuclear family. This was clear with my interlocutor Thandiwe, who had a very itinerant childhood, moving back-and-forth between the homes of her mother in Swellendam and her paternal grandmother here in Cape Town. "My parents split up when I was four; they got into a fight and my father attacked my mother with an axe, took her left arm right off. She still wears a prosthetic." Her mother became dependent on alcohol after this and her father drifted off – into other cities, relationships with other women, and so on. Her younger sister, who lives with Type 1 Diabetes, spent much of her childhood in residence at the St. Joseph's Home (SJH) for Chronically Ill Children here in Cape Town. After spending several years travelling back-and-forth between her mother and grandmother's homes, she finally settled with her grandmother shortly before her eighth birthday.

Thandiwe said that the disruptions of her childhood led her to believe that, when she and her fiancé Paul found out she was pregnant, she would finally be able to build the kind of nuclear family she never had. However, upon finding out that Paul was having affair with a colleague at work mid-way through her second trimester, she moved out of their shared home, broke off their engagement, and abandoned their plans to buy a home and raise their son together. "I felt so humiliated," she said, "and all my plans blew up in my face; suddenly I was going to be an unmarried single mother." She had intended on spending much of the first two years of her son Lungelo's life either working part-time (doing consulting work) or as a full-time stay-at-home mother, but without Paul's income, this became an impossibility. She drifted around for a while, first living with a friend in Claremont, then moving to Gardens, and then settling into an apartment in the affluent coastal suburb of Sea Point, an apartment she purchased in 2018, four months after her son was born.

By the time I first interviewed her, she no longer lusted after the nuclear family as the site at which home and intimacy might be founded since she had displaced it with another normative object: the apartment. I realised this one afternoon when she showed me the tasteful two lamps she had just bought, their tubes consisting of reedy anthropomorphic figures modelled on Giacometti sculptures. "I love lamps much more than overhead lights," she said, "the light they give off is so warm and cosy, and

you don't feel so exposed because they're not that bright." The lamps were the latest *objets* to make their appearance in the renovation she had been undertaking at the apartment, which was lavished with care and attention and would serve, she hoped, as the site at which her new family unit might flourish.

With the dissolution of her and Paul's relationship, the apartment, therefore, became the space in which her hopes for the ideal family could be actualised. "I really want to turn this into a home for us," she said, "it feels strange to say this, but being here, alone with my son, actually feels inevitable, but in a really nice way. I'm *very* happy." The warmth and joy Thandiwe evinced are illustrative, I argue, of how the reappropriation of normative objects (private property here) performs reparative work, enabling her to build a more generous future in the aftermath of a violent past.[31] The apartment thus not only indicates the extent to which objects manifest relationships (Mauss, 2002 [1925]), have social lives (Appadurai, 1986), or express the negotiation of emotions (Drazin, 2014), but also how their value, and people's affective investment in them, is premised on their absence in the past and their capacity to initiate alternative futures.

Tracings the Workings of Power and Inequality

Recognising the fact that normative relations and objects such as heterosexual marriage and private property ownership does reparative work is crucial, I argue, because it suggests why, under conditions of material scarcity and the violence of history, people might invest in them rather than repudiate them as injurious social forms.[32] It demonstrates, therefore, that socio-political norms and given modes of

[31] The notion of reparative work mentioned here resonates with, but also diverges from, Melanie Klein's concept of reparation and Eve Sedgwick's method of reparative reading. Klein's (1937) psychoanalytic notion of reparation is a psychological process the subject undertakes in order to make mental repairs to a damaged internal world, in particular by repairing and restoring their psychic objects. Sedgwick's (2003) literary notion of reparative reading is a method of reading texts in a way that emphasises their empowering and productive features, rather than simply or only critiquing their problematic aspects. In contrast to these two approaches, the notion of reparative work I discuss here is a socio-material process, one that refers to the everyday labour people undertake, in conversation with their pasts, in order to produce more bountiful futures.

[32] The same could possibly be said of some queer communities. In recent times, some Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Intersex (LGBTI) groups have come under fire from radical queer theorists who point out that equality of gender and sexuality should not mean getting access to institutions (such as marriage, for example) that have historically excluded queer people. Termed "homonationalism" (Puar, 2007) and "queer liberalism" (Eng, 2010) such movements are critiqued for forgetting the queer capacity to serve as "resistance to regimes of the normal" (Warner, 1993) and instead reproduce a "same-sex version of the heteronormative nuclear family" (Eng, 2010: 101). However, as Lewin (2009: 604) points out, we need to stop assuming that queerness

sociality might not be a priori oppressive and repressive but, in fact, serve as the grounds on which people can activate their agentive capacities. Norms thus reproduce themselves by sticking on to people's hopes and dreams and, in fact, serving as the foundation upon which those hopes and dreams might into fruition. At the same time, the workings of normativity tend to remain hidden in this process, precisely because of its attachment to people's desires for caring and stable notions of home, which are often cast as 'natural' and inevitable.

This is clear in Rachel's desires for the ideal nuclear family, which partly emerges out of her own sense of poverty and precarity. "Obviously, I'm not working," she said, "but that doesn't mean I want to eat his money [i.e. financially exploit him]. Though it's nice to have a man that can take care of us." One another score, it also emerges out of the failure of the relationships she had with her previous partners, her sons' fathers. While her eldest son Luciano's father, a member of the Numbers Gang,[33] was gunned down a month after their son celebrated his first birthday, her other children's father, Derek, was, as she put, "'*n stuk gemos*" (a piece of trash). "Do you know I bumped into him at Grand West [Casino] a few weeks ago?" she said, "he acted like he didn't see me. I approached him and said, 'hey stranger' and he greeted me in such a fake way. He ended up giving me R50. R50! After never having paid child support. Now you tell me, what am I supposed to do with R50?"

Rachel's affective investment in her relationship with Pieter, therefore, affords her the opportunity to undo, however tenuously or provisionally, her precarious financial status and provide her sons with a father figure and stable home. In pointing out the instrumental, though seemingly affirmative, tenor of this project, my aim is not to criticise her. Rather, what I want to highlight are the ways in which an unequal political-economy makes the dependence on a patriarchal breadwinner her only way out of poverty. What is more, living in a time of (neo)liberalism means that such forms of

"unquestionably resides in visible, intentional, and effective subversions of mainstream cultural norms and the related expectation that explicit and palpable transgression is the only sort of queerness worthy of the name". Lewin's own ethnographic work indicates that, for some queer people, "being a parent, being recognised as a married couple, or experiencing spiritual transcendence" was more important than transgressing social norms (2009: 603). She thus calls for "us to base our conclusions on what our informants say and do, rather than using what our informants say and do to sustain already formulated ideas," (Lewin, 2009:604) even if, I would add, this disrupts some of our most cherished political values and ideals.

[33] The Numbers Gang is a prison gang that primarily operates in the Western Cape, but also has a network of members across South Africa working both inside and outside of the penal system. The Gang is at the centre of most forms of gang violence within the Cape Flats; Rachel's boyfriend lost his life in this kind of violence.

social suffering are not necessarily negated through the cultivation of a more just and generous public sphere and public culture, but rather through individual (and individualised) efforts aimed at inventively bringing more abundant futures into being. Although it might follow the form of what Berlant (2011) has called "cruel optimism", her hope to marry Pieter is one of the few avenues to a better tomorrow Rachel has available.

In the same way that Rachel's hopes illuminate the everyday fact of poverty and the work of survival, Thandiwe's, too, alludes to the structure of socio-economic life. Racial logic and modern property law emerged side-by-side in various settler colonies from the eighteenth century onwards (Bhandar, 2018). South African political history, from the Natives Land Act of 1913 to the Group Areas Act of 1950, is replete with evidence of the ways in which private property ownership can serve as the grounds upon which institutionalised racism and legally-sanctioned modes of exclusion can operate. Thandiwe's story, however, suggests a shift (though tentative) in the political-economy. This is because as recently as thirty years ago she – as a Black woman in South Africa – would not have been able to afford an apartment in Sea Point, and if she could have, might not have been allowed, by law, to live in that neighbourhood. Her narrative thus inverts Apartheid logic: whereas in the past private property served to exclude someone like her, now it is the basis on which she can build a flourishing life.[34]

Of course, the kinds of normative objects people attach themselves to and pin their hopes on are also indicative of their own position vis-à-vis the political economy. Unemployed and without a high-school certificate, Rachel does not have access to the same opportunities and material resources as Thandiwe, who is safely ensconced in the bosom of corporate South Africa and has the luxury to secure her son's future on her own terms and with her own money. hopeful horizons the mothers in my study follow are thus intimately connected to their own access to particular kinds of capital. As much as their hopes reveal histories of trauma and the persistence of anachronistic social norms, such hopes are also indicative of contemporary forms of inequality.

However, despite the differences in their experiences, class positions, and the orientation of their desires, both my interlocutors' hopes for the future nonetheless tell us that under certain conditions

[34] Thandiwe is, of course, an aberration to the norm. Most Black South Africans, most of the time, still reside in the under-resourced townships that the parliamentary acts noted here seeked to produce.

normative or hegemonic objects can serve as the sites at which a futural 'otherwise' might be brought into view. Michael Hardt (2011) reads Marx and finds a thinker that opposes love and money, and then love and property, in a schematic that asks us to invest in love (rather than property) as a means of building more caring forms of community and relationality. Although I am sympathetic to this argument – insofar as the unequal distribution of resources is what underpins most forms of social suffering – this opposition between love and property seems, to me, tenuous. Rachel and Thandiwe's stories here indicate that love and self-interest, or, more broadly, the emotional form and the property form, cannot always be opposed to one another, given that it is precisely their conjoining which allows these two women to build more abundant futures for their children.

Conclusion

In the final analysis, my interlocutors' hopes are indexical of traumatic histories and prevailing forms of deprivation, and their social worlds' capacity to produce social relations marked by violence, abandonment, and volatility, relations my interlocutors seek to escape in the name of their children. At the same time, however, their hopes are also invested in normative objects of desire, given how these might perform reparative work, even as their very status as hegemonic entities means that they are capable of exclusion and domination. The social norms highlighted here thus not only oppress or delimit which forms of life thrive and which merely survive, but also provide the impetus through which new forms of self-making and the formation of new social worlds might occur. In the following chapter, I show how mothers' hopeful projects are not only oriented toward particular persons and things but also toward themselves, often in ways that align with forms of neoliberal self-discipline and the notion of individual "responsibility" and accountability.

CHAPTER 4

The Politics of Sacrificial Love

Introduction

"Neoliberalism" has been a key concept in anthropological scholarship over the past two decades. In an extensive review article on its uses within the discipline Ganti (2014: 89) states that the term refers to both "a structural force that affects people's life-chances" and "an ideology of governance that shapes subjectivities". What this means is that neoliberal ideas can be found in places as diverse as formal market-places and occult economies (Comaroff and Comaroff, 2000); public policy and bureaucratic practice (Ferguson and Gupta, 2002); the making of citizenship (Ong, 2006); and the making of the self (Freeman, 2014). But given its broad purview, what is the value of examining its logics while at the same time staying attentive to the particularities of our ethnographic fieldsites? How does attentiveness to the ways in which neoliberal ideas take hold within specific social contexts not only reveal its own contours but also those of the context in question?

In this chapter, I argue that the neoliberal notion of "responsibility", and its attendant demand for self-discipline, is shaped by specific local histories and social practices. Drawing on the hopes of my interlocutors Rachel and Nema, I show how their efforts to remake themselves as accountable and, thus, "good" mothers are influenced by both the culturally specific meanings of motherhood in South Africa and adumbrated in culturally specific manners. Both Rachel and Nema forewent serving as the primary caregivers of their children in order that they may, respectively, have the time and space to become sober and financially secure. Their hopes to secure their children's futures thus animated particular kinds of self-fashioning, while also generating what I call their "sacrificial love" – a decision to forego the intimacy of caring for their children on a daily basis in order that they might have the time and space to become better mothers.

These attempts at self-fashioning and the performance of "sacrificial love" are not individualised, atomistic, projects, however. Rather, they are inclusive of a range of different actors and tied to local understandings of motherhood and respectability as these have emerged through historical

processes of labour, dislocation, and material deprivation here in South Africa. Nonetheless, the everyday use of the notion of "responsibility" often positions it as an attribute of individual persons, similar to its usage by neoliberal market and state entities. This means that people's failure to inhabit it both makes them vulnerable to social blame and is felt as emotionally taxing – a form of affect that is both experienced by my interlocutors and projected by them onto others. I finally suggest, however, that people might invest neoliberal notions of "responsibility" precisely because it does not always or necessarily function as an imposition, but rather a mode through which they might build more flourishing futures.

This chapter is divided into three sections. In the first section, I provide a brief overview of some writing on the neoliberal notion of "responsibility", bringing this literature into conversation with the experiences of my interlocutor Nema. I show how her attempt at being a responsible mother both relies on neoliberal notions of self-fashioning and accountability while also reiterating the long-standing South African form of mothering-at-a-distance. In the second section, I examine my interlocutor Rachel's hopes to become sober, connecting these to local notions of decency and respectability and illustrating how the failure to be responsible is imagined as a failure to be a worthy person. In the final section, I show that despite the affective weight of living up to the notion of responsibility, people nevertheless invest in it given that, under precarious socio-economic conditions, it seems to offer a clear route toward building a more capacious and desirable future.

Room to Move: Flexible Motherhood

Recently, social theorists have located the discourse of "responsibility" as core to contemporary modes of (neo)liberal governmentality, a form of discipline that beckons actors to "shift their explanations for problems or concerns from external agents or forces to the self" (Pyysiäinen, Halpin, and Guilfoyle, 2017: 216). By attributing freedom and autonomy to individual actors, it makes them solely accountable for their well-being through a grammar of "personal responsibility" and "self-care" (Lemke, 2001: 203). Should they fail in these objectives, they are rendered vulnerable to blame, social abandonment, and chronic harm. "Responsibility" is thus a rationality that "responds to the sufferer as if they were the sole author of their own misfortune" (Rose, 1996: 59). Such a narrow focus on individual decision-

making occludes the often unequal political-economic contexts in which people are situated and thus elides the scarcity of resources and opportunities such contexts make available.

Though crafted within the realm of the political, "responsibility" also puts pressure on the supposedly intimate practices of motherhood and care. In her ethnography of the makings of motherhood in Ocean View, Cape Town, O'Rourke (2016) points out that the discourse of responsibility renders mothers ultimately accountable for their children's health, while also positioning motherhood as an individual matter outside of global and local forms of socio-economy inequality. She illustrates how, for example, HIV-positive mothers at a local Moms & Tots group are rendered as "risky" subjects whose "good" and "bad" decisions are imagined to be the sole arbiter of their child's welfare. Such a narrow analysis, O'Rourke (2016) argues, forgets the multiple relationships through which care takes place, minimises the impact of structural violence, and produces a situation that makes the mother, alone, vulnerable to blame should anything adverse happen to her child.

This notion of responsibility was certainly present in my own ethnographic work, uttered even by mothers themselves. During her lunch break at work in June 2018, Nema and I sat down on a bench in a courtyard near her office, smoking cigarettes and eating gummy bears. She began showing me the vision board she had made, a collage that was meant to depict the kind of future she desired for her daughter. Several words and images on the canvas stood out to me: the symbols of the US Dollar, Euro, and Pound Sterling; a sturdy brick wall; and the words "responsibility" and "sustainability". Nema noted that the last two words referred to the fact that the kind of future she hoped for her daughter will "require a lot of thinking on [her] part in terms of how to sustain it." Among these included her decision to take her current post as an administrative assistant because her previous one, as a workshop facilitator at a human rights non-profit organisation, did not offer enough money, benefits, or security.

To provide her daughter with a more generous future she needed money. She made the point that she attended "a terrible government school" and would thus like to give her daughter a private education. "My hope is to get her into a good school so that she can have all the opportunities I didn't have." To secure this, Nema is completing a Master's degree part-time while working full-time, two activities that, together, had become a fatiguing project. However, Nema was not a solitary and heroic figure working at unsustainable levels to secure her daughter future, but also relied on a network of

people who are helping her raise her daughter. Though she lives in Philipi, Cape Town, her daughter lives outside Butterworth in the Eastern Cape with her parents and is taken care of on a daily basis by one of her cousins, to whom Nema pays a monthly stipend. Crafting herself as a "responsible" mother has thus meant forgoing the intimacy of everyday care in order to secure her and her daughter's financial future.

Her choices are not unique, however. Scholars working on the history of motherhood in southern Africa have continually illustrated that mothers across the racial and class spectrum have not always been the primary caregivers of their children. As Cherryl Walker points out in a notable discussion on the topic of motherhood in South Africa specifically, physical care of children are often delegated to others – in the case of white and/or middle-class women, to a domestic worker or nanny, and in the case of black and/or working-class women, to other relatives, "such as grandmothers or older siblings" (Walker, 1995: 425). Becoming a "responsible" mother might, therefore, in practice, mean mothering from a distance.[35] Furthermore, this kind of sacrificial love has taken on a near normative status in South Africa, where histories of internal circular migration have, for many Black people, meant the impossibility of the nuclear family and the stretching of relatives across space.[36]

Discourses of "responsibility" are thus embedded in local understandings of motherhood as these have emerged from historical processes of dislocation and the shape of the political-economy. They are not simply imparted by institutions of the state, such as the Moms and Tots group, in O'Rourke's (2015) example, but also form part of the few routes available to women in contexts that are inimical to their and their children's flourishing. Given how expensive quality childcare in Cape Town is and given her fear that her daughter might be endangered or neglected if she is not cared for by relatives,[37] Nema's sacrificial love is thus an investment in "responsibility" and a way of being an

[35] This is not unique to South Africa. See Salazar Parreñas (2001) and Tyldum (2015) for examples of these dynamics among Filipino and Ukrainian female migrant workers, respectively.

[36] The dispersal of family members was often facilitated by the pass laws, an internal passport system that was designed to segregate the country's Black population. These laws policed which areas of the country people could enter into and people were often heavily penalised for not carrying their pass books when outside the area designated to their racial grouping.

[37] It is uncommon to see older women in townships across Cape Town – including Philipi, where Nema lives – run day-care centres out of their homes. When I had asked Nema why she could not send her daughter to one of these centres during the day (while she was at work), she mentioned her worry about her daughter's safety as a key reason.

accountable mother. What is more, it also allows her to have the time and space to realise her hope of becoming financially stable and, through this, secure her daughter's future. Although the making of the "responsible" subject is imagined to be an autonomous, activity, it is fundamentally social and dependent on others.

Hope, Sobriety, and the Politics of Respectability

Although mothers may invest in "responsibility" as a means to secure their children's future, this mode of accountability also operates as a form of discipline. Like Nema, my interlocutor Rachel also forewent serving as the primary caregiver of her child. In June 2018, she asked if her eldest son Luciano (then aged 7) could move into the home of her brother Ricardo and sister-in-law Nicole. Their own children were grown up and Rachel felt the couple could better take care of the boy, given how overstretched she was both in terms of money and the time and energy she can provide her three children. Although she was relieved and thankful for their generosity, she told me several times that once she's "sorted [her] life out" her son will come and live with her again. Her hope to remake herself as a "responsible subject" and thus a "good mother" therefore operated, like Nema before her, as a form of sacrificial love with a particular kind of temporality: once she is fully responsibilised the boy can come live with her again.

Unlike Nema, who was attempting to secure her and her daughter's financial future, Rachel's hope was to become sober. During one of our very first interviews, in 2017, I had asked Rachel what she gets up to for fun, to which she responded: "I watch TV and I drink". Although I initially took this as a joke, a year later, while conducting a life-history interview in March 2018, she told me about her long struggle with substance abuse. She started drinking and smoking at a fairly young age (14 or 15) and was later suspended from high-school for smoking marijuana. Harder drugs, like methamphetamine (colloquially known as *tik*), followed suit, although her parents later performed an intervention and checked her into a rehabilitation centre in Eerste River. When she exited the centre she no longer took any hard drugs, but then began drinking heavily. Although her drinking is much less than it was during the 2009/2010 period, she still struggled with alcohol consumption. And this is why she reiterated her

desire to quit drinking across several interviews and often equated becoming sober with becoming a "responsible" and, therefore, a "good mother".

"I drink a lot," she told me in March 2018, "a lot. But I know I'm going to stop eventually. I just need to get my life together." Although she remained vague about what plans she was taking to actualise her hope of becoming sober, she nevertheless reiterated her desire to quit drinking across several different interviews. Her hope for her children's future was thus, like Nema's before her, both about the and about herself – about the kind of person she wants to be, the kind of mother she wants to be, the kind of care she wants to offer. Of course, this will not be an easy task. Rachel's long history of substance abuse is compounded by the fact that in many households in the street where she and I live up to two-thirds of adults might be unemployed. And alcoholism and other forms of substance abuse is a big part of life here, as it is in other places where endemic poverty is a fact of everyday life (Goldstein, 2003; Ross, 2010; Knight, 2015).

At the same time, however, Rachel's hope for sobriety was not an entirely autonomous decision. This was clear to me given that, in the two years I worked with her, her children always seemed happy and healthy – the demand for sobriety and responsibility was thus not hers alone, since she appeared, in practice, to be a good mother. One person who did make this demand, however, was her late boyfriend's mother Linda, her son Luciano's grandmother, who had asked for the boy to come and live with her the previous year. Out of dislike for the old woman, however, Rachel refused this offer. In retaliation, Linda threatened to report Rachel to the Department of Social Development (DSD) and, through this, cut off her child support grants from the South African Social Services Agency (SASSA).[38] Linda's grounds for complaint were that Rachel was an "alcoholic" and an "unfit mother", two epithets she bandied about through casual gossip and which she situated as being on a continuum of Rachel's long tendency to be a "*kans-vatter*" (chancer) who was not "*ordentlik*" (respectable).

In making these accusations, Linda was drawing on long-standing notions of decency that often operate as forms of gendered and racialised social policing (Ross, 2010; Salo, 2004, 2009). Discourses of *ordentlikheid*/respectability become the means through which, in some contexts in Cape Town,

[38] SASSA is a governmental body which distributes social security grants to citizens who need it. In 2018, the monthly childcare grant Rachel would have received was R400 (approximately US$26) per child.

"young women's morality is judged by [an] older generation of women," (Salo, 2009: 15). Such judgements are not, however, deracinated calls for piety and decorum, but rather emerge out of patriarchal views of female modesty and Black people's attempts to craft themselves as worthy subjects in the face of social systems which do not recognise them as such.[39] In this way, Rachel's alcohol dependency not only calls into question her capacity to remain accountable in her duties as a mother but also, in the local context, renders tenuous her claim of being a reputable woman worthy of respect.

It is for this reason that she continually reiterated her desire to become sober, responsible, and have her son come live with her again, something attested to by numerous quotes from various interviews: "parents should take care of their children", "of course I want what's best for my children," "now that my mother is gone I need to raise my children myself", "I need to raise my own children and not give them away to other people", "I would like to take care of my own children". The discourse of responsibility is thus not only an impositional demand that subordinates her and that she wishes to oppose, but is, in fact, part of her interiority and her subjective understanding of what it means to be a "good mother" and what she needs to do to get there. What this means, thus, is that although responsibility as a discourse is imparted from above (the state, the media, and so on) and crafted relationally (with institutional or intimate others), *how it is experienced and felt* is as an ontological component of the human, rather than a culturally constituted way of being and doing.

Bad Affects: Shame, Fear, Anxiety, Anger

Because the capacity to be accountable appears as an individual attribute, the project of responsibilising oneself has heavy affective and emotional costs. When Rachel told me about Linda's threats she almost burst into tears. At a meeting in May 2018, she noted that Luciano had spent the previous afternoon at his grandmother's home. When Rachel went to pick him up early in the evening, her quarrel with the boy's grandmother was reignited and she was threatened again with being reported to social services on the grounds that she was an "unfit mother". "What does an 'unfit mother' look like?" she asked me angrily, "do I look like an 'unfit mother'?" What I thought was a rhetorical question was instead aimed

[39] In this way, the notion of *ordentlikheid* mentioned here is almost analogous to what has been termed "respectability politics" in the United States; see Harris (2014).

at me. “I’m asking *you*,” she said, “do I look like an unfit mother?” I responded hastily – “no, no, no, of course not” – but could not shake the feeling that my response would not assuage her anxieties in any way. Her hope to become sober and responsible, and the optimism of that hope, was thus also tied up with feelings of shame and doubt.

In a similar but different way, Nema was also distressed by the fact that, although she had changed jobs and put herself on a strict budget to become more financially responsible, she was still struggling financially. “Every month on payday my debit orders go off and I have these mini-panic attacks.” Furthermore, she continually chastised herself for not putting money away into her savings account, even though this was not always a feasible thing to do. Finally, what gave Nema further anxiety was her daughter (who was one year and a few months old during our research period) did not always recognise her as her mother. On her return from a visit to the Eastern Cape in October, she told me how her daughter was friendly and bubbly, but that she was almost sure the girl thought of her grandmother – Nema’s mother – as her mother, rather than Nema herself. Her anxiety about this was further compounded by the fact that her new partner was a single father to a five-year-old daughter. “It gets at me because obviously, I see him all the time with his daughter; he’s there with her, every day, and he’s doing it alone. Meanwhile, I don’t have money to go to the Eastern Cape all the time”.

Of course, as much as people who hope to responsibilise themselves feel the emotional burden of such a project, they also project it onto to others, something that was clear in Nema’s discussions of her daughter’s father, Asanda. Their deteriorating relationship during our period of research both attests to the perception that responsibility is a core component of persons and their character and highlights how dishonour is imparted onto those who fail to successfully inhabit it. When Nema and I met up for an after-work drink in October 2018 and had a brief check-in, she had just come off a phone call with him. She was taking the trip to the Eastern Cape noted in the previous paragraph and, although she and Asanda had broken up in April of that year, one of her duffle bags was still at his home in Nyanga and she intended on picking it up after our meeting. “If I didn’t need the bag I wouldn’t have called him at all,” she said. They had not spoken to one another since June that year, as a result of what she called his “irresponsibility”.

This irresponsibility is primarily manifested in his checkered history with paying child support. As she noted, although he paid child support during most of their relationship, even then he was irresponsible with money. "Once [in 2017], when he got paid, he took all his friends out for drinks, buying bottles, buying shots, with no recognition of whatsoever of the fact that he has a child at home." In December 2017, he bought their daughter clothes in lieu of the R800-R1,000[40] he usually gave in child support. He gave this amount again in January and February 2018, but then this tapered out. "He got into trouble at work," she said, "I don't really know what he did because he was so shady about the whole thing." As part of this "work trouble" Asanda had to appear in front of a disciplinary committee, an event Nema had no strong feelings about, except for the effect it would have on his child support payments, which virtually stopped after the February payment.

When April arrived and he had not let Nema know about his employment status, she broke up with him and cut off all outbound communication. When he would message her she would give him the courtesy of responding, but made it clear that she wanted nothing more to do with him, although this did not, of course, mean that he could not be involved in their daughter's life. "I'm over it," she told me in October, "if you're not in a good financial space as a parent and need to sort yourself out, then say so, but I'm not gonna chase you." She found his financial irresponsibility and lack of communication jarring, particularly in light of his earlier insistence that their daughter live with them in Cape Town, rather than with her parents in the Eastern Cape. "Imagine!" she exclaimed, "I would be stuck with this kid now, working, studying, paying rent, and paying for someone to take care of her during the day and he would be doing this shit!" But it's typical of him."

Under precarious socio-economic conditions, Nema's anger at Asanda's failure at being a responsible subject and father is understandable: she and her daughter's livelihoods are at stake. What this means, however, is that responsibility in this schematic is thus not only or necessarily an imposition that seeks to dominate, but something that lays the groundwork for the securing of their daughter's future, which is why Nema invests her hopes into it. What is more, the fact that the call to responsibility emerges out of (neo)liberal modes of governmentality and draws on local histories and cultural forms

[40] Approximately US$53-US$66.

is obscured, since the capacity for accountability is viewed not as an externally derived interpellation but rather a core component of one's character – hence Nema's assertion that Asanda's irresponsibility is "typical" of his personality or disposition.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have examined my interlocutors Nema and Rachel's hopes to remake themselves as "responsible" subjects and, through this, secure their children's futures. In order to actualise their desires for financial security and sobriety, however, they have had to forgo serving as their children's primary caregivers. Their attempts at responsibilisation, and its concomitant form of sacrificial love, draws on notions of motherhood and respectability as these have historically emerged in South Africa. Furthermore, living up to the ideal of responsibility can be an affective burden, an experience my interlocutors both inhabit and project onto others. In the final analysis, however, they invest in this notion because it offers them a clear route through which to secure their children's futures. In the following chapter, I show how mothers not only invest their hopes in remaking themselves, but also their children, in order to prepare them for entry into lifeworlds marked by entrenched hierarchies and the perdurance of forms of gender-based and racialised violence.

CHAPTER 5

Mothering and/as Transformative Pedagogy

Introduction

Anthropologists and other scholars have acknowledged that mothering is "crucial to the transmission of culture, the development of enculturated persons, the constitution of kinship, family, and household, and the reproduction of society," (Barlow and Chapin, 2010: 324). As such, mothering operates alongside other routine and everyday practices which serve as sites for the development of the subject's habitus (Bourdieu, 1977), while also acting as a space at which the self and culture become embodied (Csordas, 1994). This process of acculturation produces the subject *for* and *in* society, while it itself is also imbued with, or conditioned by, the structures of that society. This does not, however, mean that childrearing practices always or only produce prevailing power relations; feminist mothering, for example, draws upon feminist philosophies to engage in the work of childcare in a way that challenges patriarchal power and privilege (O'Reilly, 2008).

It is this kind of oppositional stance I wish to highlight in this chapter, since my interlocutors Hlumile and Robyn's hopes for their children's futures are centred on their not experiencing or reproducing prevailing forms of gender-based violence and racialised inequality. Their efforts in this vein thus resonate with those taken up during Apartheid, a time in which some Black women activists mobilised via their identities as mothers, taking up advocacy work that opposed the state in the name of securing their children's futures (Stevenson, 2011). Where Hlumile and Robyn differ from these maternal predecessors, however, is that their attempts at producing a futural otherwise for their children do not take place within the realm of formal politics, such as a social movement or civil society organisation. Rather, it occurs within the intimacy of the home, as a progressive, transformative, pedagogy that is part-and-parcel of their everyday mothering practice.

As I will show in this chapter, their hopeful efforts and educative attempts often arise out of their own experiences of racialised or gender-based violence. Furthermore, these efforts have the benefit of providing their children with safe and age-appropriate spaces within which to discuss issues of race

or gender, for example, that are often either adulterated, misconstrued or swept under the rug in other areas of South African social life.[41] At the same time, however, I show how such hopeful practices can be undercut by being delivered outside a social justice framework, the emergence of more concrete needs of the child, and the fact that mothers are not always the sole caregivers of their offspring. I finally suggest that their hopeful horizons and transformative pedagogies are indexical of liberal lifeworlds in which individuals are tasked to solve socio-political problems through individual initiative.

This chapter is divided into three sections. In the first section, I delineate Hlumile's hope to prevent her daughters from experiencing gender-based violence through an everyday pedagogy that emphasises bodily autonomy, female strength, and self-love, emphasising both the values and limits of this effort. In the second section, I turn to Robyn's efforts to teach her sons about their privilege as white-passing middle-class men, and illustrate how this project was challenged by her elder son's move to Northern Ireland to live with his father and paternal family. In the final section, I reflect on how their hopes reveal a broader fact of South African public life – the tendency to celebrate the efforts of individual actors and in so doing both occlude the workings of power and the possibility of collective attempts at problem-solving.

Nurturing Honesty, Transparency, and Self-Love

Hlumile hoped her daughters would not experience the same kind of violent intimate relationships she experienced as a young woman, and so in this way she taught her six-year old daughter[42] about periods, tampons, consent, sex, and other forms of intimacy, teachings in contrast to her own upbringing. She spent much of her young life living with her grandparents in the Eastern Cape, her parents having moved to Cape Town as migrant labourers before her tenth birthday. "It would have been useful to live with my parents," she said, "if only because they could've warned me about things: boys, drugs, stuff like that, which my grandparents didn't. I think my teens and twenties would have turned out much more

[41] I should highlight here that both Hlumile and Robyn have postgraduate degrees and move in mostly educated, middle-class, circles. They thus have access to a particular kind of vocabulary or conceptual language with which to do the transformative pedagogy noted below, something that many families in South Africa would not necessarily have access to.

[42] She also has a younger daughter, who was just over one year old during the time we did our research.

differently." She noted how her grandparents simply wanted her to "wake up, go to school, clean my room, etc.". A discussion about her period never occurred, neither did one about sex. "I definitely would have been shaped different if I grew up with my parents. I loved my grandparents but they were almost like background figures to my adolescence." Hlumile does not impart blame on anyone: her parents worked in Cape Town, ultimately, to be able to support her and her siblings. Her grandparents thus did their best, but "they were also old and tired and couldn't play all the roles a young child needed."

What we see here is another iteration of the effects of migrant labour under Apartheid: how a racialised political-economy thrust her parents into moving to and working in other cities to support their children. This form of "sacrificial love" is not, of course, a unique story[43], especially for women like Hlumile's mother, a domestic worker, who often had to leave their own children to be taken care of by relatives while they lived elsewhere caring for the children of the white middle-classes. Her childhood living arrangements can, therefore, be read as an instantiation of Ubuntu and the inventive survival tactics Black families deployed to survive under conditions of structural. At the same time, I would be hesitant to make such a triumphalist argument, given the pain it has caused Hlumile. What we can take away from this, however, is the way in which her parents and grandparents become, in her narrative, "the instantiation of the temporal", where they "signify the Apartheid past" and "an anachronistic subject-position that is deployed to demonstrate intergenerational change" (Mohamed and Ratele, 2012: 283).

It is this desire for intergenerational change that made her promise herself to be "more present" for her children and impart to them the kinds of teachings she did not receive. Whereas in the past a myriad of topics might be off-limits with her grandparents, now she cultivates a sense of open communication and trust with her daughter. "It was a different generation then, so there were lots you couldn't talk about," she said. "There's an openness now, however."[44] One of the key reasons Hlumile has taken it upon herself to engage in what is usually viewed as "sensitive" conversations with her

[43] See Nema's story in Chapter 3, as well as Salazar Parreñas (2001) and Tyldum (2015) for examples of these dynamics in other parts of the world.

[44] To add, in many African societies there are often prescriptions about how to address one's grandparents, given the strong cultural value of respecting elders (Sesanti, 2010). This might be another reason why Hlumile would not, or could not, engage with her grandparents in dialogue about some of the more sensitive issues noted here.

children is because of her own experience of sexual violence, itself situated at a period in her life when, she says, she was drinking heavily and going out a lot. Many of these experiences she connected to her parents' absence from her childhood and the lack of emotional and intellectual support she received from her grandparents.

"When you're in doubt, when you don't love yourself, you start doing things you don't want to do and you get to a space to please others thinking that this will somehow make them love and validate you," she said. "You look for love, you look to fit in, but if you love yourself you will know when to draw the line." In other words, the strategy of open communication and conversation of sensitive issues are connected to what she hoped will cultivate in her daughters a sense of self-love, self-confidence, and self-esteem. These traits, she believed, might preclude the possibility that they will fall prey to peer pressure, violence, and unhealthy relationships. In other words, her hopes that her daughters may become healthy, confident, and self-loving women animate a particular kind of mothering practice and everyday pedagogy, a practice and pedagogy that is set in contrast to the parenting she received and which she believed led to some of the experiences she had as a young woman.

The value of this effort is that she is creating a relationship of open and honest communication with her daughter, something that produces transparency, diminishes shame, and informs her daughter that she can always count on her mother for support. Hlumile's educative attempts are also in many ways, as she herself points out, different from a previous generation, where discussion of women's sexuality and bodily autonomy did not always necessarily occur. In South Africa, as in other parts of the world, sexual behaviour and expression is often rendered taboo and regulated into invisibility (Sait, Lorenzo, Steyn, and van Zyl, 2009), something that increases the risk of sexual abuse (Higson-Smith, 2004). By having everyday conversations about consent, reproductive health, and female self-care, Hlumile is thus bringing into view forms of knowledge that are often not widely available and/or might only reach her daughter at a much later stage.

However, Hlumile's efforts also have their limits. Her invocation of feminine strength, self-confidence, and self-love in some ways shifts the question of gender-based violence away from a social justice frame-work and into an individualised, sentimentalised, tenor of personal strength and character. This kind of shift does not, in fact, allow for the disruption of the kinds of patriarchal social relations

that caused her sexual assault. In saying this, my point is not to criticise her but rather to point out that she is doing unpaid domestic and emotional labour that would not need to be done in a more caring, generous, and socially just society. Although her pedagogy forms part of the everyday work of parenting, it is also, however, indexical of the high-levels of gender-based violence in our context. Her hopeful practice is thus on intimate terms with despair and renders tenuous, in its form and content, the liberal distinction between public and private domains.

Cultivating New Masculinities

Like Hlumile, Robyn is also working on teaching her children to do and live otherwise. When I asked her what she would leave in a bottle for them to find in twenty years' time, she stated that she hopes they will recognise their privilege and responsibility as white-passing men with EU passports and hopes that they would understand what it means for them to move through a world in which whiteness and masculinity are accorded so much power, status, and privilege. "I would tell them that they have a responsibility as white-passing, (if they are) cis-gender, (if they are), heterosexual men and that they have the responsibility not to continue that legacy." She went on to say that she hopes to both "protect them from the white supremacist capitalist patriarchy" and teach them to try and undo it. "I would tell them that social justice is everyone's work, including theirs".

Her politics as a feminist is manifested in pedagogical practices that are rooted, like Hlumile's, in open, honest, though casual and age-appropriate conversations about a range of different topics – including consent and bodily autonomy, as well as issues of gender, sexuality, and the economic privilege that they hold vis-à-vis other children here in South Africa. During an interview in October 2018, she noted with pride how her son had internalised some of her teachings, questioning, for example, why the word "vagina" had been bleeped out of a song on the radio ("He said, 'what's wrong with a vagina, why are they treating it like a swearword?'") and criticising his father for asserting that dresses are only for girls. "He told his father that there's nothing wrong with boys wearing dresses and at that moment I felt so proud of him and relieved that some of the things I've taught him have been internalised".

Like Hlumile, her pedagogical efforts emerge out of an earlier, painful, experience, one that is rooted in prevailing social hierarchies. In July 2018, during a casual conversation at a workshop on race she and I attended, Robyn told me that shortly after her son was born a member of her then husband's family – a white woman – exclaimed, "thank god he's white!" This relative's comment racially othered Robyn while celebrating her son's phenotypical features and thus his presumed inclusion in whiteness. Although it was a painful experience, Robyn told me that it was also a formative and important one: because it marked a moment of coming to consciousness for her, when "[her] sense of comfort within whiteness and white spaces" was broken and she started reading black feminist theory and identifying herself as a feminist. Her mothering practice thus takes the form of a pedagogy that manifests her feminist beliefs, one that aims to teach her sons about the past and present role unequal race and gender relations have played in generating and advancing different forms of structural and affective violence.

But such attempts at ethical parenting can be disrupted, particularly when mothers may not always or only be the primary caregivers of their children. When Robyn and I met up in October she was anxious about the fact that she could no longer continue her pedagogical work. She had just returned from Northern Ireland, where she helped her seven year old son settle into living with his father and paternal family, a decision that was made to get him access to the best educational and medical resources. "Quality healthcare and education are free [in Northern Ireland]. Kirby has ADHD and was previously diagnosed on the Autism spectrum. Although most of that is behind us, having access to inclusive education is important, particularly in a way that doesn't break the bank." Access to affordable quality education and healthcare for children with developmental disorders is very expensive here in South Africa, even for someone like Robyn with middle-class privilege, hence their decision.

She was crushed by the fact that her son now lives a continent away ("I feel like I've lost a limb"), and although the move was in his best interests, she was still worried about his upbringing. She told me about how taken aback she was at her ex-husband's family's home: "he [her son] now lives in a house on a hill with a paddock, ponies, chickens, and no fences, just hills in every direction, and most of that land is theirs. Even in a Northern Ireland context they are wealthy, not just by South African standards. Three to four cars in the driveway, a five-bedroom house." She also noted how, when walking around the town near where they live she "saw probably five people of colour for the whole two weeks

[she] was there". She was thus worried about the effect such material abundance and racial and cultural homogeneity will have on her son and the pedagogical work she had done thus far.

Robyn's story reveals some of the pressures disability places on kin relations (Rapp and Ginsburg, 2001), while also illustrating how citizenship and the politics of place can either empower or fail those with an impairment (Das and Addlakha, 2001). Furthermore, like Hlumile before her, she is attempting to ameliorate socio-political problems through her everyday mothering practice, something that tells us a lot about how riven the local context is not only with gender-based violence but also forms of racialised inequality. Her story is also indicative, however, of how such hopeful projects can be side-lined by the emergence of other, more urgent, and certainly more concrete needs as well as the fact that childcare, in Robyn's case brutally so, does not take place within the mother-child dyad alone, but also includes the presence and practices of various actors.

The Placement of the Ethical Injunction

In delineating Hlumile and Robyn's transformative pedagogies and indicating the ways in which these can be undercut by a range of other projects and initiatives, my aim is not to criticise my interlocutors for failing to achieve the goals of progressive politics and building more generous worlds – since these are also their goals and the impetus which gives rise to their pedagogical practices in the first place.

Rather, what I want to point to is how abhorrent our society is for asking mothers to do this in the first place, an experience that is not unique to my interlocutors. Ross (2014: 55) observes how a social programme in Manenberg, Cape Town, seeks to prevent children in the community from entering a life of gangsterism and drug addiction by educating mothers – thus rendering mothers, rather than a deprived and precarious context, the problem to be solved. Similarly, O'Rourke (2015) notes how another parenting group in Ocean View, Cape Town, proffers maternal responsibility for ensuring the future well-being of children while underplaying the life-chances a resource-poor context makes possible. This effectively occludes history and the political-economy in favour of an emphasis on individual will and determination.

The fact that these individual women are supposed to solve social problems – be they gangsterism and endemic drug use, as in Ross (2014) or the violence of racialised inequality, as with

Robyn here – is indicative of the failure of the post-Apartheid project and South African society's ability to collectively deal with the range of social ills its history and politics have generated. This failure is manifested, on the one hand, by broader political issues: including the complete deletion of redistributive justice post-1994; the emphasis of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) on reconciliation rather than justice and reparation; the spectacular forms of theft and pillaging we bore witness to during the Zuma administration; and the continuation of unequal gender relations and their most visceral manifestation in gender-based violence and femicide.

On the other hand, this failure is also continued in the narrative of public life, narratives that emphasise individual will and determination yet occlude the precarious political-economy that gives rise to the need for individual will and determination in the first place. I am reminded, while writing this, of a recent conversation with a friend on the praise received by Siya Kolisi, captain of the national rugby team. Much of this praise, circulating in both the traditional media and social media, focused on his impressive ability to have risen out of poverty and lead the team to victory in the 2019 Rugby World Cup. What was ignored, however, is the fact that he is one very few young Black South Africans to have escaped poverty, and that we should not just praise individual efforts, but also try to find collective ways of ensuring that all children have more abundant and capacious futures available to them.

The emphasis on individual effort and responsibility is, as I pointed out in Chapter 4, a consequence of (neo)liberal logic. This logic is premised on the retraction of the state and collective bodies and asks individuals to invent and operationalise individual solutions to what are ultimately social and political problems. In some instances, this is imparted from above, as with Ross (2014) and O'Rourke (2015), while in others it is also part of people's own histories, politics, and desires, as I have pointed out throughout this dissertation. Both, however, are indicative of the displacing of a collective approach to problem-solving in favour of an individual one, something that places an undue affective burden on individual actors as they go about their life-building efforts.

Of course, the forms of care and pedagogy noted here cannot only be interpreted as (neo)liberal in form and substance. As Ross (2014) points out, the emphasis on maternal responsibility is also part-and-parcel of notions of "family values" which long predate contemporary capitalism's form. At the same time, however, I would argue that it is nevertheless indicative of a longstanding tenet of liberalism

more generally, a logical consequence of the promotion of the sovereign and autonomous individual, and the idea that persons are "free" to remake themselves and change the course of their lives. There is nothing inherently wrong with such a notion, except that it conceals the workings of power and forgets that individual freedom and self-making are not unregimented endeavours but rather deeply shaped, and often constrained, by the social conditions in which they take place.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have examined my interlocutors Hlumile and Robyn's hopes to ensure more caring futures for their children via a transformative pedagogy that forms part-and-parcel of their everyday mothering practices. Rooted in their own prior experiences of gender-based and racialised violence, these educative attempts aim to prevent their children from either experiencing or reproducing such social relations. The value of their efforts lay in the fact that they enable the emergence of discussions around issues of race, class, and gender that are otherwise unheeded, thus contributing to a change in the structural, however piecemeal or provisional. At the same time, however such forms of pedagogy can be undercut by taking place outside a social justice framework, the emergence of more concrete needs of the child, and the fact that mothers are not always or only the primary caregivers, and thus teachers of moral wisdom, to their children. Ultimately, my interlocutors hopes' are indexical of the forms of violence and inequality that are so prevalent in our context. Furthermore, the fact that they have to do this work is indicative of a public sphere that celebrates individual efforts at the expense of more collective modes of producing a futural 'otherwise'.

CONCLUSION

In this dissertation I have tracked the hopes and hopeful practices of six Black women living and raising children primarily in Cape Town, South Africa. I have shown how these hopes aim to bring into being futures marked by upward mobility, stable and loving kinship relations, financial security and sobriety, and more just and caring worlds. In Chapter 1, *The Promise of Hope: A Literature Review*, I outlined three approaches scholars have taken in examining the practice of hope, (a) hope as a product of social relations, (b) hope as a moral claim toward the future and a necessary additive to progressive politics, and (c) hope as a method of knowledge formation. I have stated that my own approach combines aspects of each of these in order to argue that hope is an index of prevailing forms of power and inequality, and thus a useful concept with which to gain critical knowledge about a given social world.

I delineated this argument across four ethnographic chapters. Chapter 2, *An Archive of Longings*, brought my interlocutors Hlumile and Angela's hopes for upward mobility into conversation with Stef Jansen's ethnography *Yearnings in the Meantime* (2017) in order to argue that the desire for "ordinary objects" and "normal lives" are indicative not only of the workings of an economy of scarcity but also the specifics of time and place. In Chapter 3, *(Normative) Objects of Desire*, I argued that my interlocutors Rachel and Thandiwe's hopeful investments in the hegemonic entities of heterosexual marriage and private property perform what I call "reparative work", allowing them to build kinship forms which they had before been excluded from. In Chapter 4, *The Politics of Sacrificial Love*, I argued that my interlocutors Nema and Rachel's efforts at becoming financially secure and sober both align with neoliberal notions of responsibility and self-discipline, while also enabling them to secure their children's futures. And finally, in Chapter 5, *Mothering and/as Transformative Pedagogy*, I argued that my interlocutors Hlumile and Robyn's educative attempts to prepare their children to entry into worlds marked by violence and inequality is indicative of the (neo)liberal demand that individual subjects solve social problems through individual initiative. Across all these chapters, I have thus shown how their hopes tack back and forth between the pragmatic and the utopian. All, however, are repudiations of the current order of things or how things might have ended up, and thus hold a positive relation to the

future, the Blochian "not yet" and the Povinellian "otherwise" that is not underpinned by precarity and violent social relations.

Despite the scope of this dissertation, it also has limitations. The constraints of time has meant that I had very little opportunity to engage with the children's fathers and other members of my interlocutors' families means that I have not been able to access crucial information about the roles played by actors (other than mothers) who collectively work toward actualising particular kinds of hopes. Furthermore, my emphasis on mothers alone means I do not come to know whether there is a clear correspondence between their hopes and those held by their children's fathers and, if not, what this divergence means for how the child is raised. Future study around the category of hope as it relates to childrearing would thus need to engage with several family members beyond mothers – including fathers, grandparents, siblings, and, possibly, the children themselves.

Nonetheless, given that my focus has been on the form and content of particular kinds of hopes – rather than whether or not they become actualised and through what means – the work I have done here is nevertheless hold value, given that it sheds light on the contours of the social, political, and economic worlds in which the next generation of human are reared. Furthermore, it provides an account of agency that is not premised on notions of liberal autonomy or radical resistance, but instead unfurls as a navigation and negotiation of ordinary practices (building a home, becoming sober, saving money) which often hold an ambivalent relation to power. Such practices, as I show throughout this dissertation, nevertheless lay the groundwork upon which people can activate their hopeful capacities and cultivate their version of a more bountiful future.

It should be clear, however, that hope is not enough if we wish to build a more generous 'otherwise'. Individual practice, as these women try to do, will not suffice. We require other modes of organising social life that is not premised on injurious modes of normalcy, gender inequality, racism, and economic precarity and vulnerability. These will not come about by celebrating hope or simply adding it to our prevailing political toolkit, although in an era of worrying spectres this is necessary, of course. Rather, we require critical analysis, collective forms of world-building, and theoretical and methodological approaches that not only tack back and forth between the personal and political, but also show how deeply entwined these often are. This is an ethical and political necessity.

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